



Americans Against Gun Violence
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**2019 National High School Essay Contest
\$1,000 Award Winner**

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(Student's high school affiliation withheld at student's request)

Over two centuries ago, the Bill of Rights was adopted, in part, in response to the fears of Anti-Federalists that the proposed U.S. Constitution could lead to the formation of a tyrannical federal government. This was a fear born from experience with British rule, under which the colonists had found themselves oppressed and their rights denied. Thus, among nine others, the Second Amendment was written into law, proclaiming that:

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

The Amendment emphasized several major points made in conjunction with one another as it described the constitutionality of a militia that was "well regulated" and purposed for the "security of a free State," therefore making it necessary for the people to have the right to bear arms.

Yet, it often feels as though the first half of the amendment is omitted in colloquial discussion of gun rights and regulations, which is dangerous as it ignores the purpose of the Amendment: to promote a safe, free America. This ignorance has led to lax gun laws under the guise of a general "right to bear arms," endangering the Founding Fathers' intended reality of a nation in which citizens could bear arms in militias to maintain the freedom of their nation.

It now seems as though this right has been taken so far out of context that it rather enables individual civilians to put the security of the State at risk. With the national rate of gun deaths the highest it's been in more than 20 years (1) and Americans being 10 times more likely to be killed by a gun than people in other developed countries (2), we live in a time in which we don't possess the basic freedom from fear - a right that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt proposed more than half a century ago. Instead, we're forced into

lockdown drills at school to prepare ourselves for, among other situations, the very possible threat of a shooter, stealing the innocence from a generation of youth who experienced their first lockdown when they were barely old enough to read.

Indeed, the “well regulated militia” of the Second Amendment has been missing in action when it comes to preventing the harrowing number of mass shootings and other gun homicides in our country committed by individuals who were never intended to have a constitutional right to “keep and bear arms.” By irresponsibly extending the right to bear arms to citizens who have no reasonable connection to a well-regulated militia, we have allowed these weapons to fall into too many hands.

It needs to be realized that America’s gun laws are broken. The Second Amendment was meant to be read holistically, not in bits and pieces to suit legislators who are backed by major gun manufacturers. It is long past time for us reject the fraudulent misrepresentation of the Second Amendment promoted by the gun lobby and to enact stringent gun control laws comparable to the laws that have been shown to work in other developed countries.