NRA National Convention

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.

Friday, April 15, 2005

Thank you, Charlie (Daniels). It’s good to see that there are a few celebrities left in the world like Charlie Daniels and Ted Nugent who believe every word in the constitution is sacred...
...and not just a few hand-picked parts.

I’m proud to welcome you both, and proud to welcome all the men and women who have led the fight to protect the Second Amendment for every American...
...especially your outstanding leaders, president Kayne Robinson and executive vice president Wayne LaPierre.

I know that Sandra Froman will continue that distinguished tradition.

As a gun owner and avid hunter, I appreciate the work the NRA does day in and day out to protect our right to bear arms...
...although I don't get to exercise that right as often as I'd like...
...especially when our legislature is in session... as it is now.

Right now there are some South Texas turkeys that think they've got a pardon from the governor...
...but that will change soon enough.

Today as we celebrate the victories of the past 25 years, I can't help but note how the public dialogue has changed when it comes to gun control.
You don't hear as many politicians making ridiculous claims about guns causing crimes these days... and the reason for that is simple.

Responsible gun owners...
...like those in this room...
...are not a threat to society, but a deterrent to crime.

You have invested a vast amount of time and energy into educating the American people...
...and the American people in turn have sent a loud and clear message to their elected leaders:....
...the Second Amendment is not a loophole, so stop trying to close it!

And you know even the liberals are heeding that message when their presidential candidate...
...who got the lowest possible rating from the NRA...
...stages a goose hunting photo op.

At least he wasn't looking down the wrong end of the barrel!

The 2004 election was an important victory in the battle to protect the right to bear arms for all Americans... because the Second Amendment has one of its most ardent defenders in George W. Bush. Like a lot of Texans, the president understands that gun ownership is an important part of our American heritage... and through activities like hunting and sport shooting... parents pass on to their children the values that are so critical to our future.

That’s why as governor, I have been proud to sign many pieces of legislation supported by the state affiliate of the NRA.

We have protected Texas shooting ranges from junk lawsuits that tried to shut them down for making too much noise.

We passed a law that allowed Texans to possess a handgun in a recreational vehicle.

And because the NRA has done such a tremendous job promoting safety with the Eddie Eagle Gun Safe program... I signed a law that requires visiting resource officers in public elementary schools to offer to teach the program at least once a year.

We have also worked hard to strengthen our right to carry law... because it is a good law that has made our people safer.

In Texas, we believe that people should have the right to protect themselves whether they have called Texas home for years or are just visiting for a few days.

In the past year alone, Texas has more than doubled the number of reciprocity agreements with other states that allow citizens from other states to legally carry a concealed weapon here in Texas... as well as allowing Texans to carry away from home.

I’m committed to ensuring we have as many concealed handgun reciprocity agreements as possible with other states.

So far we have 18. And even if you are from a state that doesn’t allow Texans to carry... I still think you should be able to carry while you are here.

That’s why we’ve also signed unilateral agreements with three other states... including Iowa, which I’m proud to say we added to the list just this week.

When states started passing right to carry laws a few years ago, the critics made a lot of noise and a lot of predictions about more crimes being committed by law-abiding citizens.

But today, the statistics tell a different story.

Here in Texas, a person who holds a concealed handgun license is far less likely to commit a violent crime... more than 7 times less likely, in fact.

And it is no coincidence that states with right to carry laws had...
...on average...
...violent crime rates that were 24 percent lower than states without in 2002.

We have changed the terms of debate when it comes to the right to carry...
...much as we have done with the debate on gun control.

Even the most ardent anti-Second Amendment politicians are finding it harder and harder to argue for more gun control when gun ownership levels in America are at all-time high...
...and violent crime rates recently hit a 23 year low.

The progress we have made is a tribute to your education efforts...
...and your support of leaders who understand that without the guarantee of the Second Amendment...
...there can be no guarantee of any of the others.

Thank you for choosing Texas for your annual meeting.

I wish you continued success, because your work is protecting the rights of every American today and for every generation to come.

Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless America.