Full Text of Gov. Perry’s Remarks to 2013 NRA Annual Conference

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

Friday, May 03, 2013 • Houston, Texas • Speech

Thank you, Chris [Cox - Executive Director, NRA Institute for Legislative Action] for that introduction. I’d also like to thank you for everything you’ve done, both for this proud organization and in defense of the rights of gun owners across this country.

As Governor of the Great State of Texas, let me welcome you all to the Lone Star State and the beautiful city of Houston! It's been eight years since we last had the honor of hosting your convention, which I think is too long, but I understand the need to spread the word in less enlightened places.

But things have changed a bit here in Texas. Let me catch you up on what has transpired while you were gone. There's a lot more of us here in Texas: our population is growing by about 1,000 a day, and we're working a lot more. Texas employers created something in the neighborhood of 1.5 million new jobs since you were last here.

When last you visited, the Texas Longhorns were about to embark upon a National Championship season, with a Heisman finalist at quarterback. Today, a team from Texas is preparing to make a title run, with a Heisman Trophy winner calling the shots. However, this team plays its home games in College Station at Texas A&M University. Gig 'Em! If any of you don't know what that means, ask someone who just yelled "Whoop!" back at me.

Some things remain the same, however. The governor of Texas is still a proud member of the National Rifle Association.

Obviously, Texas and the NRA are a perfect fit, because in Texas, we believe in freedom, personal responsibility and the God-given right and peace of mind to defend yourself and your family. In Texas, we never lose faith in the Founding Father's wisdom to include the Second Amendment to the Constitution among the Bill of Rights.

I wish that sentiment was found in more places, particularly a place along the banks of the Potomac. Thankfully, Texas has sent capable, principled individuals to Washington to defend our rights, and I'd like to thank Sen. Cornyn and Sen. Cruz for each playing a key role in fighting back the anti-gun lobby's latest attempt to undercut the Second Amendment.
We realize it was just the most recent round of what has already been a long fight, but it's an important fight and one we'll ultimately win.

It's part of a pattern that we see all too often. Someone clearly impaired, or filled with hate, commits a horrific crime. In the wake of these tragedies, you can set your watch by how long it takes for people who hate guns, and gun owners, to begin another campaign to add a new set of federal gun laws to the books.

I have empathy for the families of those who lost loved ones. Everybody here does. But the correct response to these tragedies is not another federal law that criminals will simply ignore anyway. I realize to those who don't understand the issue, gun laws may look like an easy fix, and might even make some of them feel like these laws do something to solve a problem. Except they don't fix anything.

They may win a news cycle, or help our president score political points, but they do nothing but make it harder for law-abiding Americans to own guns. Intentionally or not, by keeping guns out of the hands of those who will use them properly, and legally, they're only making it easier for predators to prey on the defenseless.

The National Rifle Association is the voice of experience and common sense, reminding everyone that a threat to gun ownership is a threat to a basic Constitutional right. It's a strange notion that with the stroke of a pen, any president could prevent something from happening in Colorado, or Connecticut, or even Texas.

As an organization, all we say is, hold on...let's think about this. At that point, invariably, some in the media try to turn us into the bad guys. It would be almost laughable, if it weren't such a profound misconception.

Nobody likes gun violence, especially NRA members. We own guns for sport, for collecting, and for self-defense. It's also a way to spend time with those closest to us. I know, personally, many of my fondest memories are of hunting with my father, and my own children, and I'm looking forward to building new memories with my grandchildren someday. I'll bet most of you have great memories about the first gun you ever owned. I do. It was a Remington single-shot bolt-action .22LR, given to me by my grandfather. I still have it.

The NRA is about safe, sane and responsible gun ownership. Beginning, middle and end of story.

Even beyond the basic infringement on our rights, these gun laws sell the false premise that they're actually solving a problem. They're not.
Maybe they made it harder for friends to sell or trade guns between themselves, or for a father to pass a family heirloom to his son or daughter. While they might make the anti-gun lobby feel buoyant, and give the liberal news media another reason to pat themselves on the back, the root causes of these violent incidents would remain and fester.

The laws liberals and the anti-gun lobby trot out in the wake of every tragedy would do nothing to target the causes of these incidents. They do nothing to help those with severe mental illness who go undiagnosed, untreated and ignored. They do nothing to curb a culture that views violence as daily entertainment. And they do nothing to put people in place who can quickly and effectively respond when an armed threat surfaces.

There's no easy fix to those problems, certainly nothing as easy as demonizing gun owners, gun-rights supporters and, increasingly, gun manufacturers. Over the last several months, my office has been reaching out to companies being forced out of their home states, by draconian laws or just by public pressure, and inviting them to consider moving to Texas. We'll happily welcome any gun manufacturer who feels vilified, and any of their employees who are in danger of losing their livelihoods due to this kind of hysteria.

Our message to them, and our message to everyone in the country, is simple: There's still a place that loves freedom in America, where people can pursue their dreams free from knee-jerk government regulation. That place is called Texas!

May God bless you and, through you, may He continue to bless this great country that we love so much.