

Making a Difference



*By Genie Jennings,
Contributing Editor*

In early April 1989, a 21-year-old National Guardsman was riding his motorcycle with a girl on the back through a coastal Maine town. When a police officer attempted to stop him for a minor traffic violation, he sped away. He was under the influence not of drugs or alcohol, but rather of being young and foolish. He drove into a construction site, and as so many chases end, he crashed the motorcycle. He was convicted of "...passing a roadblock and driving to endanger." Both were felony offenses.

He spent two weeks in the county jail, and for almost half a quarter century he has been labeled a felon. The greatest effect of the conviction is that he forfeited his right to own a firearm. This means that he could no longer hunt with his brother, father and grandfather. He has suffered the loss of this tradition for the last 24 years

In mid-April 2009, I heard a snippet of his story from his

Only Connect

brother, a friend of mine and a hunting buddy of my husband. I asked to know the full story, and became consumed with the inequity of his situation.

Since his arrest he has led an exemplary life. He has never had so much as a parking ticket. He has worked consistently, is married with children. He owns his own home and does not have debt. All of which is nice, but in addition he has served throughout that time in the Maine National Guard.

He has been deployed in war zones. He received a Purple Heart in Iraq, and a Maine Silver Star. We have given, and will continue to give, him a gun to defend our country both at home and abroad. We will allow him to risk his life, and he has done so on our behalf. However, at home we do not allow him a firearm to protect himself and his family. We do not allow him a firearm to go hunting with his kinsmen.

Twice, he had attempted to get a pardon. Twice he had been denied. There is a clause in the Maine regulations on pardons denying one for those who seek only to have their gun rights restored. That clause leapt out at me when I read it. Why would a pardon be denied to someone who wanted a Constitutionally-protected right restored?

After receiving permission to share his situation, I contacted

legislators on both the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee and the Legal and Veterans Affairs Committee. I had a two-fold request. First, to help my friend's brother, and second to help other people who are in similar circumstances. Although I was able to find some interested members, no one was willing at that time to pursue a bill.

Politically, 2010 was a watershed year in Maine. For the first time in over four decades, we elected a Republican governor and majorities in both houses. Our Constitutional Officers (State Treasurer, Secretary of State, and Attorney General) are elected by the legislature. The husband of one of my co-workers was running for AG, and she enlisted my help in his election. I was thrilled to assist a man of the caliber of William Schneider! I was thrilled when he was successful, and I was delighted to be invited to his inauguration.

As I had done all I could think of in the legislature to no avail, I took a desperate tack. I wrote a letter to the Governor explaining the National Guardsman's situation. I asked him for a pardon. I carried the letter in my jacket pocket to the inauguration. It was December 2010.

Just so you understand, I am not a big donor or anyone very special in my state or my party. I am merely a worker. I serve on

committees, I am secretary at both my town and county level, but that is work—not glory. In addition I knock on doors, hand out literature, gather signatures on petitions, make phone calls. I find those kinds of things very difficult. However, since 2008 I have done them because I have had candidates and issues that are very important to me, and those are the types of things that must be done to achieve political objectives.

I worked to get Paul LePage elected. I have known him and his wife, Ann, since the beginning of that primary season. They are wonderful, friendly, down-to-earth people. But, the Governor was my last resort in my mission, and it took an incredible amount of time to get up the nerve to

speak to him. Eventually, I found a quiet moment to approach and hand him the envelope, explaining that it was quite important, but something I would like him to take his time reading. I did not want a hasty and, therefore, possibly negative decision.

Early the next morning the Governor called. He agreed that something needed to be done, and he was forwarding the letter to the Secretary of State, who was the one who would handle things. We waited.

There were glitches, and there was waiting. Eventually, there was a hearing in front of the Board of Pardons. That seemed to go very well, but there was more waiting. Then the Guardsman got a notice that the pardon was approved. And we waited. Every day he

would check his mailbox and every day there was nothing.

My friend, the Attorney General, looked into things, but the answer from the bureaucracy was “these things take time.” There was another election and the legislature returned to Democrat hands, the Constitutional Officers changed, and my links were severed.

Then in late April 2013 the pardon arrived! This fall a very deserving man will once again be able to hunt with his brother, just as when they were boys.

I feel I have made a difference in the amount of happiness there is in the world. And, in the amount of justice. It is a good feeling.

Since writing this I have been struggling with my role in the story. My friend’s brother had hit a stone wall. He had done

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everything he could think of to remedy his situation, and then accepted that an important part of his life was gone. He accepted that he was responsible for the sadness this caused.

When I first heard about him, I was struck by the injustice of handing a man a rifle and sending him into a war zone, thereby showing he is trusted to handle the weapon under those circumstances, and would be trusted to handle the weapon within our state should the need arise to call up the National Guard, and yet refusing him the right to own and carry a firearm in his private life. I was further struck by his willingness to accept the punishment his actions had brought upon him.

Once I formed the concept that “something should be done,” I immediately realized that I was in a position of possibly being of assistance. I had been contacting members of the legislature about various bills in a variety of ways. I knew some elected officials, and, while I did not have a working relationship with others, I had developed connections with their staffs. Volunteering within the Republican Party, I knew many candidates for both state and federal offices.

If I began without a clear idea of how to help, I did know of people I could ask for direction. All it took on my part was a willingness to proceed. The situation demanded action, so I took it.

That was phase one. I know there are likely others in the same kind of predicament, who are continuing to pay for poor decisions, made many years ago. Phase two concerns finding a pathway for them.

W&G

Federal Court Dismisses Lawsuit Aimed at Lead Ammo Ban

*By Dave Workman,
Contributing Editor*

The U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia has dismissed a federal lawsuit aimed at banning ammunition with lead components which amounts to yet another blow for the anti-hunting Center for Biological Diversity (CBD).

It is a significant victory for hunters, shooters and the firearms industry. The National Shooting Sports Foundation hailed the decision. NSSF intervened in the case along with the National Rifle Association, Safari Club International and the Association of Battery Recyclers.

Joining CBD in the lawsuit were six other groups.

“We are gratified that the court has found this second frivolous lawsuit, which is essentially the same as the one dismissed last year, was equally without merit,” said NSSF senior vice president and general counsel Larry Keane in a press release.

According to the NSSF, more than 10 billion rounds of what the group calls “traditional ammunition” because it has lead components are manufactured and sold annually in the US.

Keane noted that, “Banning traditional ammunition would cost tens of thousands of jobs in America and destroy wildlife conservation that is funded in part by an 11% excise tax on the sale of ammunition. The protection and management of wildlife is properly handled by the professional biologists in the state fish and game agencies, as it has been for over a hundred years.”

EPA had already twice

denied attempts by CBD to have the agency ban traditional ammunition, and the court had dismissed an earlier case brought by CBD seeking the same relief, NSSF noted.

Keane said there is “simply no sound science that shows the use of traditional ammunition has harmed wildlife populations or that it presents a health risk to humans who consume game taken with such ammunition.”

If lead ammunition were banned, it would have several impacts on hunting and shooting. Ammunition would become more expensive, including common .22-caliber rimfire ammunition, virtually all of which is loaded with lead bullets.

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Insurance

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“Liability coverage is designed to protect against accidental damages, most of which involving guns would be covered under a homeowner’s insurance policy. While some policies may provide coverage for liability stemming from the intentional use of a firearm for defensive purposes, no liability insurance product covers intentional acts of malicious violence, whether committed with a gun, a car, or any other instrument that is used as a weapon to deliberately harm people,” said Grande. “It is inconceivable that any insurer would offer such coverage, either as part of a homeowners or renters policy or on a stand-alone basis.”

However, sponsors of the insurance mandates seem oblivious to the insurance industry’s warnings.

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