

Making a Difference



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Often in the first issue of the year I present the Resolutions that were accepted at the previous September's Gun Rights Policy Conference, as a suggested guideline for something that you might like to consider working towards during the year. Every year since the inception of the conference the Farmer Resolution has been included. The Amended Farmer Doctrine states that "an attack on any class of arms is an attack on all classes of arms." A logical extension would be that an attack on one kind of arms user is an attack on all.

It is true in all kinds of things that unity is imperative to survival. However, it is not always easy to stick together. This year in Maine was a case in point.

For neither the first, nor sadly the last, time there was a Citizen's Initiative on the ballot to ban the hunting of bears with "dogs, bait, or traps." The wording was such that it gave the impression there

The End Game

was a choice between the three, but there was not. It was hunting in the three successful ways, or no hunting, including if you had a problem bear in your vicinity. If the measure had been successful, only authorized personnel from the state would be able to harvest bear.

Intellectually, the hunting of bears by interested people is not hard to defend. We have wildlife biologists who study the animals and plants in our state. They determine how many of each species should be harvested. At present, hunters are not culling enough bears to provide a viable population. The bear population is increasing, and each species has an impact on the others in an area.

In southern Maine as in much of the east, whitetail deer are overabundant. Their major predator is man. While there is a good deer harvest by hunters, it is extremely disturbing to see how many deer are "taken" by vehicles.

In areas where there are too many deer the vegetation—both natural and introduced—suffers. There is an impact on the fauna, on other animals who use the vegetation for food and shelter, and on humans who share the deer's space. Elaborate means must be taken to keep these herbivores out of gardens and away from ornamental plantings. Many people simply give up on the idea of having plants around their homes.

However, this is not the case

statewide. In Northern Maine bears have had a serious impact on the deer herd. Coyotes get a lot of blame, but newborn deer and moose provide a large part of the diet of bears that have just come out of hibernation. The coincidence of the occurrences (birth and awakening) seems a good ecological match. It has been highly detrimental for a deer herd that is also coping with harsh winters and a loss of many adults due to coyotes, and overuse of habitat.

Still, if the state biologists are ignored and everyone simply thinks about the aesthetics of these methods, the "No on 1" was hard to sell. Thankfully, we were able to do so. Most of the bear are taken over bait, and that was something that was distorted by the proponents of this initiative. "Garbage" was what they called the day-old doughnuts that are the mainstay of baiters. The best part of the baiting argument was that it allows the hunter to examine the bear he is considering, and not take mothers with cubs.

It is legal to take a bear in Maine during deer hunting season. Few are taken. The fact is that one rarely comes across a bear while walking through the woods. They are smart and cunning and do not especially like people.

A bear referendum can pass because of the emotion that is raised among non-hunters, but why are they put on the ballot? The suggestion was made during the debates

on our initiative that the Humane Society of the United States wants to end hunting. The way they are attempting to do this is by promoting predators. As I pointed out, in northern Maine bears and coyotes have seriously diminished the deer herd. As predators increase, their prey diminishes to the point that hunting by humans needs to be decreased and eventually entirely eliminated.

HSUS has sponsored bear initiatives in several states, and has had similar legislation proposing the banning of hunting with dogs. Their claim that using dogs for hunting, whether finding, retrieving, or chasing game, is cruel to the dogs shows only that they have no knowledge of canines! Dogs are happy when they are working at whatever activity they do. They love to pull and herd and hunt. A dog that is doing the job for which he was bred exudes joy. Misguided though it is, HSUS can garner the emotion necessary to ultimately eliminate hunting.

That is not the end game.

What would happen if no one hunts? It would be a crippling blow to the pro-arms segment of the country. Hunting is one of the alleged but non-existent "rights" that anti-gun groups claim they do not want to infringe. However, suppose it becomes extremely difficult or impossible for people to hunt? Many would simply give up the practice. Many more who would have started hunting because they had friends or relatives as an example, would never start.

Just as when our country fought for independence, and when the United States was eventually brought into the two European world wars, it was easy to prepare

our troops because such a large portion of American men were capable hunters. What will happen should that cease to be the case?

What will happen to our freedoms should a large portion of our Second Amendment supporters

stop doing the things that make them aware of their rights? We must always remember that we are all in this together, and protect the rights of those whose particular interest we do not share.

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FSU Shooting Seen as Failure of Gun-Free Zones

The recent tragic shooting at Florida State University (FSU) should have been prevented, and could have been stopped as soon as it started, according to FloridaCarry.org.

While people were being shot at FSU, a combat veteran looked on in horror. Despite being "in position" to end the assault, and in spite of having the necessary skills and training to defend himself and his community had he been armed, as the first shots rang out he realized that he could do nothing.

Even as an expert marksman-qualified Army infantry veteran, he was powerless to help due to Florida laws that require that he be disarmed on campus.

"This is the result of the failed policy of creating places, such as Florida campuses, where unstable attackers know that they can bring

mayhem without fear of being immediately stopped," Florida Carry noted, which advocates change.

"The tragedy at FSU has once again showed, to horrible effect, that people must not be deprived of their right to an effective means of self-defense," Florida Carry said in a press release. "This attack was also another tragic reminder that, far too often, people who are known to be disturbed are not being referred for mental health interventions that could save lives."

The state pro-gun groups said it has resolved "to do everything within our power to protect and expand the right of self-defense throughout Florida. College Campuses are no strangers to violent crime, saying "campus carry is needed now."

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