

Gun rights groups close ranks to back bill to update GCA

by Dave Workman
Senior Editor

Several leading gun rights organizations have thrown their weight behind federal legislation that would replace the “sporting purposes” and “sporting use” standards set down in the 1968 Gun Control Act, and ostensibly rein in what the bill’s sponsor called “the over-reaching hand of the federal government.”

Congressman Rob Bishop’s H.R. 2710 is seen by a growing number of people as a slap at abuses and arbitrary regulation of arms and ammunition by the Justice Department’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

In a statement introducing his bill, Bishop, a Utah Republican who chairs the House Natural Resources Committee, noted, “The founding fathers recognized that the right to bear arms is fundamentally tied to self-defense. This is as true today as it was over two centuries ago when the Bill of Rights was ratified.

“The ATF,” Bishop said, “has exploited vagaries present in federal gun law to chip away at basic rights. This legislation will slap the over-reaching hand of the federal government and restore some of the freedoms our grandparents enjoyed.”

Announcing his support for the measure, Alan Gottlieb, chairman of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, followed that reasoning.

“There is no ‘sporting purpose’ stipulation in the Second Amendment,” he said, “and there should not be one in federal law. The right to keep and bear arms is not just about hunting or target shooting. It is time for this restrictive language to be replaced.”

NRA chief lobbyist Chris Cox was first to publicly support the measure, noting, “This important legislation would prevent arbitrary ammunition bans like the one attempted earlier this year by the Obama Administration.” He was referring to ATF’s attempt to ban M855 ammunition for the AR-15 and similar rifles earlier this year. Some believe this contributed to the departure of B. Todd Jones as ATF director.

“With the support of America’s law-abiding gunowners,” Cox recalled, “the NRA was able to beat back (President) Obama’s attempt to ban ammunition used by millions of law-

abiding Americans every day for target shooting, hunting, and self-defense. This legislation would fix the law to protect us from similar government overreach in the future.”

Larry Keane, senior vice president and general counsel of the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), called Bishop’s bill “one of the most



Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT) is chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee.

important pieces of reform legislation that the firearms and ammunition industry has seen come before Congress in recent years.” He urged Bishop’s colleagues on Capitol Hill to join as co-sponsors.

H.R. 2710, designated the Lawful Purpose and Self-Defense Act of 2015, already has 50 co-sponsors in the House.

If passed into law, the measure will replace “sporting purpose” language in the law—which Second Amendment advocates have argued for more than 45 years should never have been there in the first place—which NSSF called language that is “outdated and a hindrance to bringing lawful products to market.” The measure also will prevent arbitrary designations that some firearms and ammunition are “destructive devices.”

For decades, the “sporting purposes” and “sporting use” provisions in GCA ’68 have been a thorn in the side of firearms importers and dealers, not to mention Second Amendment advocates who, like Gottlieb, have

maintained throughout that the terms are tantamount to bureaucratic Trojan horses. As the Supreme Court determined in *District of Columbia v. Dick Anthony Heller* in June 2008, the right to keep and bear arms was never written to protect hunting or target shooting.

The right to keep and bear arms may encompass hunting and competition,” Gottlieb said today, “but that’s not why the Founders included it in the Bill of Rights.”

Furor over DOJ’s ‘Unified Agenda’ gun restrictions

Gun rights activists across the country are watching closely to see whether the Obama administration’s Justice Department presses more than a dozen proposed new gun control measures that may be pushed in Congress that include restrictions on .223-caliber pistols and expanding the criteria for disqualifying people from gun ownership, according to published reports.

The *New American* called these proposals “the president’s continuing war against the Second Amendment.” A report in *The Hill* referred to the proposals as “reforms” and identified their proponents as “gun safety advocates.”

The Hill also noted that among the proposals is one having to do with “gun storage requirements.” The newspaper said this is “a renewed effort to keep guns out of the hands of people who are mentally unstable or have been convicted of domestic abuse.”

Since the proposals were disclosed several weeks ago, they have become the target of criticism across the Internet, with some elaboration in the process.

Objections have been raised by people concerned that new regulations aimed at forever stripping “domestic abusers” of their firearms rights could be applied to someone who spanked their unruly kid. Expanding mental disqualification could be applied to anybody who might need assistance managing their finances – a job for which people train as accountants – some critics worry. It’s a complaint that has been made about veterans losing their gun rights after being unfairly classed as unable to conduct their own affairs.