

All-Out Offense

*Appear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend;
march swiftly to places where you are not expected.*

Sun Tzu, The Art of War

March 13, 1995

For years, gun owners have asked: “When is NRA going on offense?”
That time is now!

NRA-ILA is running flat out, on more fronts than it has people, which means that a lot of the ILA staff, from Tanya Metaksa on down are pulling two rows (as they used to say in the cotton fields).

On Capitol Hill, we’re on the verge of three or more hearings on Federal abuses on both the House and Senate side—not just BATF—and not just law enforcement. That will be followed by a House floor vote in mid-May and appropriations and oversight hearings for numerous agencies and departments which directly affect firearms owners.

In the states, three more legislatures—Utah, Arkansas and Virginia—have passed laws requiring the issuance of concealed firearms carrying licenses for qualified applicants. Similar NRA-pushed personal protection bills are moving in almost a dozen states, some of which are expected to be passed.

And on the educational front NRA Foundation and other groups, including the American Legislative Exchange Council, the Congress of Racial Equality and the Second Amendment Foundation, are sponsoring a Second Amendment symposium April 2-4 that brings together some of the top scholars and students of the gun issue—with all viewpoints being represented on the panels.

In addition to political speakers like Presidential candidates Bob Dole

and Phil Gramm, and Senate Judiciary Chairman Orrin Hatch, panelists will include leading Second Amendment scholars, legal specialists, medical experts and media representatives (including former NBC News President Michael Gartner, who has advocated repeal of the Second Amendment).

The program, which should qualify as “continuing education” for lawyers and some academics, carries a stiff \$395 registration fee, which will limit the attendance. Hopefully it will attract significant press coverage, including portions on C-Span.

The nationwide push for personal protection permits is causing much bleating and hand-wringing in the press, but the primary focus during the next couple of months will be the Congressional firearms hearings.

All the details haven’t been worked out, but I’ve seen the general outline of some of those hearings—the first of which is likely to be in late March—and you’re going to like them. And Sarah Brady won’t.

For one thing, in contrast to the way things normally are handled in gun hearings, our witnesses are likely to be scheduled first; their witnesses last, after the press deadlines and after all the cameras have long-since gone. (I was introduced to that tactic in 1967 during my first Congressional testimony, as editor of *Gun Week* before Sen. Tom Dodd’s committee on his “mail order gun” bill, which became the Gun Control Act of ’68. Gun rights activist and then-official of Amnesty International Mark K. Benenson and I were the last called, finally testifying around 6 p.m. on the third day.)

Editor’s Note

Even though NRA had suffered a defeat in the form of the Clinton Ban, it had turned that lemon into lemonade. Passage provided the hard vote needed to defeat an entrenched Congressional majority, which included the turning-out of a sitting Speaker of the House, an event that had not happened since Republican William Pennington lost his seat amidst the pre-war chaos of 1860.

Holding a hard line on the ban rather than “accepting bad to avoid worse” led to the 1994 Clinton ban being the only Federal gun law ever to be repealed.

Meanwhile, NRA bolstered its offensive advantage by pushing concealed weapons liberalization (note that Neal Knox *never* called a concealed carry permit statute a “right to carry law” preferring the alliterative term “Personal Protection Permit”). By taking the initiative, NRA was able to force the other side to react and to fight issues of its choosing in places of its choosing.