

TESTIMONY

Bill 19-614, Firearms Amendment Act of 2011

I am James R. Collier and have resided in the District of Columbia since 1981. I was commissioned as an infantry officer in the United States Army following my graduating from the University of Alabama. I volunteered for and was trained as a Special Forces Officer and served as the Executive Officer of what is commonly referred to as a Green Beret A-team. I served one year voluntary tour in the Republic of Vietnam conducting specialized infantry combat missions.



I left the army with the rank of captain and went to graduate school on the GI Bill and got a degree in Environmental Engineering and served as the head of the DC government water quality and environmental programs for a quarter of a century until my retirement a few years ago.

I began hunting squirrels on the family farm alone without adult supervision at the age of 8. I purchased my first firearm at the age of 10 by working in the cotton fields. I have continuously owned firearms over the last half century. I competed on the University of Alabama small bore

rifle team and currently compete in rifle matches held at Quantico Marine Base and pistol matches at Thurmont, Maryland.

Before the District was litigated to restore our Second Amendment rights, and they are only partially restored at the moment, I tried to buy a pistol for competition under the old rules that allowed ownership of “Olympic type pistols” and was told by the DC MPD that there was no need to apply because they would deny it. The DC restrictions on firearms that are used for legitimate sporting purposes whether competition or hunting serves no purpose for those of us who have tried our best to live in some semblance of peace with our fellow man. So after 55 years of gun ownership and good behavior including serving in the Vietnam War, the DC council continues to restrict my freedom to purchase firearms that they deem to have “dangerous” characteristic such as thumbhole stocks and pistol grips.

Here are three amendments that make sense from my perspective as a hunter and a competitive shooter:

1. Change the reason a person may register a handgun from only self defense at home, to include hunting, and competition. As it currently stands, the only reason a person may legally register a pistol is for the purpose of shooting another human being. I hunt with two of my handguns and shoot competition events in Maryland and Virginia with another. I find it weird that I have to fill out a form and sign that I am buying a pistol so that I can shoot someone.
2. The rest of the United States allows for the purchase of the so called black guns and that has lead to modifications of the M-16 type assault rifle to a modern semiautomatic rifle with extreme accuracy. These modified rifles are now used for various hunting and competition purposes and no longer have the purpose of a combat weapon. The District law currently provides for them by using language from the California law found in sections 2324.2 and 2324.3 (attached). In the gun owners vernacular these rifles are called “Cal Complaint” or “California legal”. It would be helpful to those of us who have a use for these rifles for competition events and hunting, if the Council would add a few definitions, as was done in California, to help the DCMPD in their determination of whether a particular AR style rifle is legal to own in DC.

A definition to be added is for “detachable magazines” and is as follows from the California Attorney General’s website:

Magazine, detachable - An ammunition feeding device that can be removed readily from the firearm with neither disassembly of the firearm action nor use of a tool being required. A bullet or ammunition cartridge is considered a tool. Ammunition feeding device includes any belted or linked ammunition, but does not include clips, en bloc clips, or stripper clips that load cartridges into the magazine.

This definition can be found at the following link:

<http://ag.ca.gov/firearms/forms/pdf/awguide.pdf>

3. Continuing the thoughts clarifying the law concerning AR style rifles, definitions for the words “flash suppressor” and “muzzle brake” should be added such that DCMPD can readily differentiate between the two devices, both of which attach to the end of the barrel and have similar appearances but very different uses.

California defines flash suppressor thusly:

Flash suppressor - Any device designed, intended, or that functions to perceptibly reduce or redirect muzzle flash from the shooter’s field of vision.

A good definition of muzzle brake is as follows:

Muzzle Brake/ Muzzle Compensator is a device attached to or integral with the muzzle of a firearm, designed to redirect the propelling gasses to counter the firearm's recoil and/or muzzle rise.

Each year I travel down to South Carolina near the Georgia border and hunt feral pigs in the swamps and most of the available rifles have shortcoming for this type of herd animal in this type of habitat. Some of the AR style rifles are the ideal hunting rifle for this type of close range, multiple target situation. Being as no one can now say that those of us who have obeyed the law and own pistols in the District of Columbia have caused an increase in the crime rate, I see no reason for the council members to believe that if I am allowed to have a pistol gripped semiautomatic rifle that I am suddenly going to become a criminal and run amuck. I have not run amuck in all the years since I returned from Vietnam and I don’t expect to do so anytime soon. The restriction on legitimate semi automatic rifles needs to be rescinded and or clarified for those of us who are law abiding.

For those who are interested, I maintain a website on You Tube of some of my hunting and shooting and it can be found by inserting “Microcystis” in the search function or at the following link.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/Microcystis?feature=mhum>

One of the videos is of me shooting a Wyoming pronghorn antelope at 501 yards with a pistol. Being retired, I now travel where ever I please whenever I please to hunt whatever is legal and strikes my fancy.

Excerpts From DC Law

2324.2 In those instances where the definition of “assault weapon” refers to a firearms manufacturer or description without including a specific model reference, the term “assault weapon” shall be interpreted to include only those firearms produced by such manufacturer, or possessing such description, that share characteristics similar to other enumerated firearms in section 101 paragraph 3A(A)(i)(I) through (III) of the Act, or possess any of the enumerated characteristics listed in section 101 paragraph 3A(A)(i)(IV) through (VIII) and 3A(A)(ii) through (iii) of the Act.

2324.3 A firearm that is produced by a manufacturer or possesses a description that is included in the definition of “assault weapon” referred to in § 2324.1, but which does not share characteristics similar to the enumerated firearms, or the enumerated characteristics described in § 2324.2, may be registered, provided that the firearm is not otherwise prohibited from registration under District or Federal law or regulation.

(IV) A semiautomatic, rifle that has the capacity to accept a detachable magazine and any one of the following:

(aa) A pistol grip that protrudes conspicuously beneath the action of the weapon;

(bb) A thumbhole stock;

(cc) A folding or telescoping stock;

(dd) A grenade launcher or flare launcher;

(ee) A flash suppressor; or

(ff) A forward pistol grip;