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May 28, 2013

The Honorable Richard "Rick" Perry
Governor of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Re: Critical NRA gun rights bills

Dear Governor Perry:

I feel somewhat uncomfortable communicating with you in such a formal manner after having had the pleasure of visiting with you in person on numerous occasions over the past years. Nevertheless, the matters set out herein are of such great importance to Texas gun owners as to warrant the formalities of a letter.

I have been honored to serve on the Board of Directors of the National Rifle Association of America (NRA) since 2001. In that capacity, I had the pleasure of meeting you personally and endorsing your election and reelections as Governor of our great State. I have known you for many years as a champion of Second Amendment rights not just in private conversations, but as a man who has spoken publicly on numerous occasions calling for a change in Texas law that would allow Texas concealed handgun licensees to carry their self-defense handguns everywhere in the State. In fact, after the tragic murders at Virginia Tech in 2007, you were the first public figure to stand before TV cameras and bravely call for such a change. Last December you renewed that call in response to the gut wrenching mass murder of twenty innocent children and six brave adults trying to protect them at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. While other politicians were dancing in the blood of innocent victims to gain a perceived political advantage, you were among the few who spoke the truth and called for the only rational change. I have never been prouder to be a native Texan than I was to hear our Governor publicly call for the only change that can prevent such tragedies in the future.

Your support for reducing the off-limits areas for Texas concealed handgun licensees is not motivated solely to prevent mass murders by evil people seeking their fifteen minutes of fame. When we talked during the last campaign, you noted that every Texan is a potential victim

and that the long-standing excellent track record earned by Texas concealed handgun licensees makes it clear that the legislature must remove unnecessary and outdated restrictions on where these honest Texans may defend themselves and their families. You renewed your call “that every Texan with a concealed handgun license should be able to carry their handguns everywhere in this State.”

While it is an honor to acknowledge your longstanding support of law-abiding Texans, it saddens me that I have to write this letter. In spite of Texas concealed handgun licensees’ exemplary eighteen year track record that is the envy of the country, and in spite of your repeated calls to remove unnecessary restrictions on Texas concealed handgun licensees, the 83rd Texas Legislature has done something most native Texans would have considered unthinkable. The Texas Senate amended a critical NRA/TSRA bill (HB508) to grant special privileges to Texas Senators and Members of the House of Representatives in the form of the ability to carry handguns everywhere in this State, while denying their constituents the same ability to defend themselves and their loved ones.

HB508 was filed to bring to an end the decade-long practice of governmental entities and agencies posting unenforceable Tex. Penal Code §30.06 signs in an attempt to coerce and intimidate concealed handgun licensees into not carrying their self-defense handguns where it is perfectly legal to do so. This Bill passed the House with virtually no opposition, but the Senate added what became a killer amendment. When the House refused to concur with the Senate amendment, a conference committee was created. Rather than strike the elitist language from the Bill, the committee increased the insult to law-abiding Texans by extending the special privileges to members of the United States Congress. The House rightfully rejected this clear abuse of power and the Bill so critically important to all Texas concealed handgun licensees died as a result.

Prior to the Senate’s eleventh hour attempt to create special privileges for elected officials and members of Congress, the Chairman of the House Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee (El Paso Democrat Joe Pickett) refused to allow the Committee to even vote on a bill that would have allowed all Texas concealed handgun licensees to carry their handguns everywhere in the State (HB3218). While Chairman Pickett opposed the Senate amendment to HB 508, that did not lessen the insult to all law-abiding Texans that accompanied both the refusal to allow a vote on HB3218 and the Senate’s attempt to create special privileges for themselves and all elected officeholders.

Now that a special session has been called, I respectfully request that you stand up for Texas gun owners as you have done in the past by adding to the following subject matter to the call:

1. Comprehensive campus-carry;
2. Elimination of virtually all remaining off-limits areas for Texas concealed

handgun licensees (HB3218); and

3. Prohibition on the use of unenforceable 30.06 signs by governmental entities and agencies (HB508).

These matters are of critical importance to law-abiding Texas gun owners who have fallen victim to a failed power play by the Texas Senate and the refusal of Chairman Pickett to allow votes on several firearms-related bills. I am confident that the millions of gun owners in Texas will long remember and reward your support of their needs at this critical time.

With the utmost respect and gratitude, your friend,



CHARLES L. COTTON