



Americans Against Gun Violence
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2019 National High School Essay Contest \$1,000 Award Winner

(Student's name and high school affiliation withheld at student's request)

Misunderstandings and Vagueness

Our troop was greeted by a light autumn breeze when we entered the site. We were handed our earmuffs for hearing protection, and soon muffled explosions rocked the air sporadically. The sensation of the projectile leaving the barrel was fleeting. It was strange, having time halt for a second, being completely startled at the result of moving your right index finger less than an inch back.

I was fifteen at the time. Prior to my Boy Scout venture to a Rifle Shooting merit badge course, my only other related memory was during a summer police program only the firearm used was a training model. We were all taught the safe way to grip a pistol, then were tasked with heading to a simulated store robbery and deciding for ourselves whether we could convince the burglar to surrender or use the weapon to end the threat. While none of the danger was real, the intensity was still there, gripping at our moral principles. The confrontation ended in a flash, with both the cashier and the robber on the floor and my properly gripped pistol trembling from what had just occurred.

Whenever the topic of gun control would be brought up in school or in the news, these images would resurface in my mind. The Second Amendment would usually be mentioned, though it would only be explained as "the right to bear arms". Of course, I would be somewhat familiar with the Amendment as it has garnered a lot of controversy over the past few years. However, when I took a closer look at the amendment, "militia" popped out to me. This word was never discussed.

Regarding Blackmun's statement, I interpret it to mean that no one has the right to own a firearm if it is not for the purpose of maintaining a militia. Blackmun would have his assertion overturned in the case of *District of Columbia v. Heller*. In 2008, a 5-4 majority of the Supreme Court held that individuals who are "unconnected with service in the militia" are still

guaranteed the right to own firearms, bringing up the history of the amendment and its interpretations to support its decision.

I assert that legal issues are rooted in misunderstandings and vagueness. The fact that there is so much discussion concerning gun control must mean that the amendment was written quite poorly.

Was it?

In reality, the amendment has been grotesquely overthought, and the importance of the term "militia" is undervalued. If the right to bear arms was a fundamental human right, why would "militia" need to be mentioned?

The Second Amendment was added to the Bill of Rights mainly to satisfy the demands of Anti-Federalists who feared that the federal government created by new U.S. Constitution might overpower states' rights unless states maintained armed militias. There is little if any evidence that the Amendment was included to guarantee an individual right to own guns outside of service in a well regulated state militia. In the context of today, the Amendment is unnecessary.

Some days, I imagine what it is like to be on the other side of the trigger. I do not see the need for people to have a right to willingly end a life with one pull.