

## Unpublished editorial by Jan Larson McLaughlin

It is time for reasonable gun owners to take back control of the association that supposedly represents them.

We as a nation are still mourning one mass shooting when the next occurs. Yet the NRA refuses to discuss any type of gun control, any form of background checks, any type of study that might lead to some answers.

Instead, when legislators consider measures to reduce gun deaths, the NRA and its tentacle groups assign them failing grades and label them as anti-gun. National leaders, who talk tough about protecting our borders from threats, last week voted down legislation that would prevent people on our nation's "no-fly lists" from legally buying guns. That seems like a no-brainer, but some of our elected officials are so scared of getting on the NRA's naughty list that they won't even take common sense steps on gun control.

Recently, the Buckeye Firearms Association went a step further and blasted criticism at Bowling Green State University faculty members who had written to State Rep. Tim Brown, R-Bowling Green, asking him to not support legislation allowing concealed carry of firearms on Ohio college campuses. House Bill 48, which has since passed the House, allows hidden loaded weapons to be carried on college campuses, school safety zones, day care facilities, public areas of airport terminals, police stations, and certain government facilities. Brown, who voted for the bill, said it primarily "cleaned up the statute" of where concealed guns can legally be carried in Ohio.

The gun association got the list of BGSU faculty who wrote to Brown by filing a Freedom of Information Act request. The group specifically targeted James Evans, a geology professor, for his email to Brown in which he called the NRA a "terrorist organization."

The Buckeye Firearms Association stated the definition of terrorism as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."

As far as Evans is concerned, the NRA meets that definition — except that in the U.S., it's legal.

The Buckeye Firearms Association went on to publish the names and email addresses of BGSU faculty who contacted Brown with their comments, plus a photograph of Evans, who had used his private email to send his comments. The result, at least for Evans, was a rush of emails to him from the association's members, with wording that he characterized as threatening. Evans believed the intent was to frighten BGSU faculty from contacting State Sen. Randy Gardner, R-Bowling Green, since the legislation is now in hands of the Senate.

"I'm not intimidated," Evans said. Others weren't either, apparently.

Gardner said late last week that his office had received emails from BGSU faculty concerned about the legislation. The Buckeye Firearms Association accused BGSU faculty of violating policy prohibiting their use of university email to contact their legislators.

However, there is no policy in place that prohibits such use. Dave Kielmeyer, university spokesman, said that faculty and staff are encouraged to avoid using BGSU email accounts to advocate their personal positions. But in response to the accusations by the gun group, the university issued a statement that "discussions by academics via university email or list serves on social issues, particularly those affecting the learning environment at BGSU, are absolutely appropriate."

The criticism of faculty input seems to be one more effort by the gun lobby to take the focus off the issue of gun violence.

Recently, when the subject of firearm deaths comes up, the gun industry shifts the discussion to mental health issues as the true problem. Often it's the two together (guns and mental illness) that create a deadly combination, so why not tackle both?

No freedom — even those granted in the Constitution — comes without limits. When enacted, the Second Amendment did not mean any American could openly carry assault weapons and not be stopped until they start shooting. When the forefathers penned "well regulated militia," I doubt they meant any individual with a gun. It's important to note that they included the word "regulated" — as in subject to controls.

When BGSU's Evans heard last week about the latest mass shooting, this one in San Bernadino, California, his thoughts were again, "Here is another tragedy."

The answer is not more guns, he said.

We've tried arming every citizen who is so inclined. It hasn't solved the problem. So let's look for other solutions, ones that reasonable gun owners can support. But that will mean responsible gun owners are first going to have to take back control of their national organization, which seems more concerned about the gun industry than the average gun owner.

The NRA has not always been the paranoid "pry the gun from my cold dead hands" organization that it is now. It was formerly an association aimed at serving its membership by providing safety classes, marksmanship training and even gun control support. But somewhere it got hijacked from its real purpose to its fanatical presence. It's time for reasonable gun owners to say enough is enough.