

No Nation is Immune to Tyranny, Says Lt. Col. Allen West

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California's gun laws remain some of the strictest in the nation. According to the CATO institute's Freedom in the 50 States Index, California is ranked 49th in the nation in firearms freedom followed by Hawaii.

The state has restrictive assault weapons laws, mandatory background checks, waiting periods, red flag laws, a minimum 21-year age requirement to purchase firearms, and until recently, a limit on high capacity magazines.

In March 2019, a federal district court judge, Roger T. Benitez, permanently enjoined the 10-round restriction on magazines for the state, citing its unconstitutionality. It is currently being appealed by the state's attorney general, Xavier Becerra.

With two members of Congress running for president on a strong anti-gun platform hailing from California, many outside of the state seem to view the body politic in its entirety as reflective of its restrictive policies. This however, doesn't seem to be entirely the case, as conservative youth organizations across the state push for fewer restrictions on their second amendment rights on college campuses.

One such organization, Young Americans for Freedom, hosted Lt. Col. Allen West to speak at Orange Coast College in Costa Mesa, Calif., about the topic of gun rights and restrictions. The event on May 1 drew roughly 300-400 attendees.

Lt. Col. West was deployed to Iraq during Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was later elected to the US House of Representatives in 2010 for Florida's 22nd Congressional District, serving one term from 2011 to 2013. He now serves on the board of Directors for the National Rifle Association.

With a number of prominent politicians in California proposing more stringent firearms restrictions, West explained the danger of gun confiscation and how no nation is immune to tyranny.

"Turn on your TV and look at what's happening in Venezuela right now. In 2011, 2012 Hugo Chavez banned private gun ownership for the reasons of 'gun violence.' Look at the violence that's being enacted upon the people," he told The Epoch Times.

Referring to Sen. Kamala Harris and Rep. Eric Swalwell, West warned about the rhetoric that is becoming mainstream amongst California Democratic politicians.

“You have in California a senator that is running for president that said if she was elected she would use an executive order to eliminate the second amendment. You also have a representative here in California, Eric Swalwell, who has said that he will have a mandatory gun buyback program, and if you don’t participate in it, you’ll be criminalized and have your guns confiscated. So, [tyranny] can happen here.”

West was asked about the spark in youth activism against gun violence following the Parkland shooting last year and whether the movement’s goals are justified or misled.

“Parkland High School is in the district that I represented, so I know it very well. I spoke there. I think there are a people, much like Rahm Emmanuel, that believe you shouldn’t let a good crisis go to waste,” West said.

West believes that the main issue isn’t the lack of laws restricting crime-prone individuals from obtaining firearms, but a failure on behalf of law enforcement to enforce existing laws.

“The real failure that happened down [in Parkland] was the FBI and the Broward County Sheriff’s Department received 36 call outs and complaints on Nikolas Cruz. They did not respond appropriately. You also have the Broward Super Intendant’s office and the Obama era ‘Promise Program.’ The actions of Nicholas Cruz were never reported because they did not want to lose any funding for the school with disciplinary issues.”

The Promise Program was an education policy set in place by the Obama Administration’s Department of Education, which issued school guidelines to not suspend children of color that are “disproportionately impacted” by suspensions and expulsions, a situation they said leads to a “school to prison” pipeline that discriminates against minority and low-income students.

“I think that young people need to make sure they get all the facts and not just get manipulated by people that have an ideological agenda,” said West.

West elaborated on what solutions can be done to address school and workplace shootings without impeding on the second amendment. He suggested that no-go zones were not the solution and only encourage shooters to attack unarmed victims. West also suggested former military and teachers that wish to protect their students to be the first line of defense.

“We should not have these no-go zones for firearms. We have a lot of former military on our schools and I think that they should be allowed to be that first line of defense. You may have teachers that are willing to volunteer to do that.”

West further criticized the lack of immediate action as the reason for the Parkland shooting taking so many lives and suggested that allowing vetted former military to arm themselves on school campuses would be a solution.

“The response time has to be immediate. You can’t sit back as you saw in Parkland. You had someone who was supposed to be the school resource officer who took no action. In a minute or two, a lot of things can happen. We need to establish that first line of defense and I say look at some of these retired military.”

Lt. Col. West stressed that the second amendment was vital to the viability of the nation.

“In living my life I’ve always been an advocate. I took an oath to the constitution when I was a Second Lt. back in 1982, so I’ve always been one that believes in that important second amendment right because it guarantees all the others.”