
NRA stays mum on extended-capacity magazine ban

Posted by Jesse Singal

January 14, 2011 02:00 PM

After the Tucson shooting, Robert A. Levy, chairman of the board at the (very) libertarian Cato Institute and an intellectual Don of the gun-rights movement, told MSNBC's Michael Isikoff that he saw no constitutional objection to banning the sorts of high-capacity magazines used by Jared Lee Loughner in the shooting. And in fact there is a movement to do just that — Democratic Representative Carolyn McCarthy of New York, among others, has introduced legislation that would ban extended capacity magazines (the Globe has come out in favor of this move), leading to an uptick in sales as gun enthusiasts worry the ammo will be outlawed. These magazines were outlawed under the assault weapons ban that expired in 2004.

It was kind of a big deal for such a cornerstone of the pro-gun movement to make this admission, so I was curious if the National Rifle Association was also feeling the winds of change. I called the group up to see whether it had an established stance on the extended-capacity ammunition issue. My call made its way through the channels and I soon got a strange email from Andrew Arulanandam, the NRA's director of public affairs: "At this time anything other than prayers for the victims and their families would be inappropriate."

I emailed him back to emphasize that I was simply trying to find out their stance, but as of writing this I hadn't heard back. The NRA is apparently trying to be respectful in the wake of a tragedy, but it's still a bit unusual for an advocacy organization to not be forthcoming in response to such a simple query.

A little bit of Googling made it clear that, at least up until Saturday, the NRA probably would have been opposed to any sort of limit on extended-capacity clips. Not just because the group is philosophically opposed to any such restrictions, but because, in at least one case, it had addressed this issue directly: when a member of the California State Senate introduced a bill that would have mandated the registration of magazines holding more than ten rounds, the organization came out firmly opposed. So it stands to reason that it would be similarly opposed to a federal bill not only regulating, but actually banning, such ammunition.

That is, unless the Tucson shooting changed the group's stance. But I wouldn't hold my breath, as the NRA is not known for capitulation.

|||