

## [The NRA: More on the Side of Guns Than of Liberty in a Tennessee State House Race](#)

[Brian Doherty](#) | Aug. 2, 2012 12:44 pm

National Public Radio the other day noted how the National Rifle Association is targeting one of its own members, a staunch Second Amendment defender, in a Tennessee state representative race, because she believes in liberty and private property rights more than she believes in "gun rights" for the sake of gun rights.

Details from [the NPR report](#):

The head of the NRA's lobbying arm, Chris Cox [says]: We've put up ads and billboards comparing Debra Maggart to Barack Obama. That's because while both say they support our Second Amendment rights, they've both worked against our freedoms behind closed doors.

[NPR REPORTER BLAKE FARMER]: State representative Debra Maggart of Hendersonville, Tennessee crossed the NRA by helping block an effort to allow people to keep guns in their vehicles at work. She says it would have trampled on private property rights of business owners. The NRA's wrath is trained on this ranking Republican incumbent, but gun owners are irritated with the state's GOP leadership as a whole. Maggart just went along with the Republican governor, who had been told in no uncertain terms by the state's largest employers they wanted the guns-in-trunks bill scuttled....

Representative Maggart calls the NRA's campaign bullying and a fundraising stunt.

MAGGART: You know, they've got to have a reason to collect your dues. You know, they've got to have a reason for people to send them a check.

FARMER: Maggart, herself a member, has been sending the NRA checks for years, and contends she's about as big a gun gal as she could be. She hosts a skeet shoot fundraiser. She has her carry permit, and is a regular at the local indoor shooting range, which has turned its back on her.

The NRA is showing itself a mere lobbying group for a special interest and not an actual defender of liberty here. As the Cato Institute's Roger Pilon [wrote on Cato's blog](#):

The NRA's Chris Cox, [who's spearheading this political vendetta](#) and, in the process, is supporting Maggart's tea-party backed opponent, invokes both "our First Amendment right to assemble to petition our government" and, of course, the Second Amendment, seemingly oblivious to the fact that [neither is relevant here](#). In fact, the issue could not be simpler: individuals, including employers, have a right to determine the conditions on which others may enter their property.

The Second Amendment prevents the *government*, not private parties, from infringing your right to keep and bear arms. If a private party can ban you from his property for *any* reason, good or bad, he can do so for carrying a gun. So too with the First Amendment: it limits what *governments*, not private parties, may do; government may not violate your rights of assembly and petition, none of which is happening here.

As so often happens, here again we see how single-issue politics, in the name of liberty, ends up undermining liberty. The tea party should know better.

My December 2008 *Reason* magazine feature "[How the Second Amendment was Restored](#)" (and my book [Gun Control on Trial](#)) explain how the NRA was an enemy of the *Heller* case's successful bid to get the Supreme Court to recognize that the Second Amendment indeed applies to individuals, until its very last step.