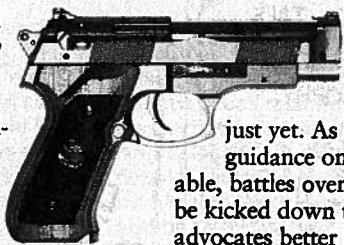


Guns: Loosening the restrictions

Gun control is on its way out, said David Rittgers in *National Review Online*. In a landmark ruling last week, the U.S. Supreme Court established that the Second Amendment's "right to bear arms" supercedes state and local gun-control laws, and that no community can simply ban handgun ownership outright. The 5-4 ruling, which overturned Chicago's nearly three-decade-old handgun ban, "is a harbinger for the end of gun prohibition." Good riddance, because gun control doesn't work. In Chicago, which had the strictest handgun restrictions in the nation, 258 public school students were shot last year, 32 of them fatally. Meanwhile, in just the past month, three citizens armed with "illegal" handguns used them to defend their homes and businesses from criminals. "Strict gun-control policies have failed to deliver on their essential promise: that denying law-abiding citizens access to the means of self-defense will somehow make them safer."



and the mentally ill, and to ban guns in schools and government buildings. So the gun lobby shouldn't pop the champagne just yet. As a result of the court's vague guidance on what restrictions are reasonable, battles over state and local laws will simply be kicked down to the lower courts. Gun-control advocates better step up the fight, said *The New York Times* in an editorial. Handguns already kill more than 30,000 Americans every year. Unless local officials use the latitude in the ruling to press for more and better gun restrictions, "the results will be all too real and bloody."

Not so fast, said *The Economist*. In writing for the majority, Justice Samuel Alito emphasized that the Constitution does not confer "a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever," and that it was perfectly reasonable to bar firearm ownership to felons

You've got it backward, said Damon Root in the *New York Daily News*, and a little review of history shows why. Gun control was originally conceived by white racists trying to keep firearms out of the hands of recently freed slaves. It was therefore appropriate that the lead plaintiff in the Supreme Court case, Otis McDonald, was a 76-year-old African-American veteran who wanted to protect himself from illegally armed thugs who were terrorizing his neighborhood. Gun-control laws didn't affect the thugs one bit; they only prevented citizens like McDonald from defending themselves. That's now changed, because the court has finally given the Second Amendment "some long-overdue respect."

Steele: One gaffe too many?

This time, Michael Steele really has gone too far, said William Kristol in *The Weekly Standard*. In Steele's short tenure as chairman of the Republican National Committee, rarely has a week passed without his saying or doing something that embarrasses the party. But his latest gaffe is of a different order of magnitude. Footage surfaced last week of Steele telling an RNC fundraiser that the war in Afghanistan is "a war of Obama's choosing" that the American public doesn't want. Worse, Steele implied that the U.S. is doomed to lose it—saying that any "student of history" could tell you that "the one thing you don't do is engage in a land war in Afghanistan." Steele, of course, is factually incorrect—it was President Bush who declared war on Afghanistan after the 9/11 attacks. More importantly, Steele's anti-war sentiments put him "at odds with about 100 percent of the Republican Party," which has called for extending the war beyond Obama's one-year time line. It's time for Steele to resign.

Republicans are in a bind, said Earl Hutchinson in *HuffingtonPost.com*. The GOP knows the gaffe-prone Steele is "not fit to head the RNC," but it can't get rid of him "for the very reason he was plucked for the lead role in the first place."

As a rare black Republican, Steele was chosen to disguise the fact that the GOP has become an insular party of white, extremely conservative, blue-collar voters from the South. But keeping him carries its own risks, said Rick Klein in *ABCnews.com*. With the November elections looming, party officials have already "given up trying to coordinate election planning or policy proposals through Steele's RNC." Even if he shuts his mouth for the next five months, Steele has already fragmented and weakened the GOP just as it prepares for battle.

Actually, said Glenn Greenwald in *Salon.com*, Steele's gaffe may end up damaging Democrats more than Republicans. As soon as his Afghanistan comment came to light, the Democrats rushed out a statement condemning Steele for "betting against our troops and rooting for failure in Afghanistan." If this attack on Steele's patriotism sounds familiar, it is because it's an obvious echo of the Right's attacks during the Bush years on anyone who questioned the war strategy in Iraq or Afghanistan. With prospects in Afghanistan looking glum indeed, Democrats may well regret insisting that those who want to bring our troops home are spineless traitors.

Wit & Wisdom

"Immortality, or a state without death, would be meaningless ... because death gives meaning to life."

Philosopher Bernard Williams, quoted in *The Kansas City Star*

"The true hypocrite is the one who ceases to perceive his deception, the one who lies with sincerity."

Writer André Gide, quoted in *The Jerusalem Post*

"Freedom is nothing but a chance to be better."

Albert Camus, quoted in *The Denver Post*

"They always say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

Andy Warhol, quoted in the *Louisville Courier-Journal*

"Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."

James Baldwin, quoted in the *Huntington, W. Va., Herald-Dispatch*

"At 18 our convictions are hills from which we look; at 45 they are caves in which we hide."

F. Scott Fitzgerald, quoted in the *London Times*

"Home is not where you live, but where they understand you."

Author Christian Morgenstern, quoted in the *Montreal Gazette*

Poll watch

■ 64% of Democrats support Elena Kagan's confirmation to the Supreme Court, 61% of Republicans are opposed. Fox News poll

■ 26% of Americans didn't know that the country won its independence from Great Britain. Some of them named a different country, ranging from France to China to Mexico. Marist Institute