DEAD OR ALIVE: ORIGINALISM AS POPULAR CONSTITUTIONALISM IN HELLER

Reva B. Siegel

We should find the lost Second Amendment, broaden its scope and determine that it affords the right to arm a state militia and also the right of the individual to keep and bear arms.

— Robert Sprecher, ABA prize winner, 1965

The Court has taken sides in the culture war, departing from its role of assuring, as neutral observer, that the democratic rules of engagement are observed . . . . What Texas has chosen to do is well within the range of traditional democratic action, and its hand should not be stayed through the invention of a brand-new “constitutional right” by a Court that is impatient of democratic change.

— Justice Scalia, Lawrence v. Texas, 2003

The Court’s announcement in 2008 that the Second Amendment, ratified in 1791, protects an individual’s right to bear arms against federal gun control regulation was long awaited by many, long feared by others. What produced this ruling and what might it reveal about the character of our constitutional order? For many, constitutional law changed because the Court interpreted the Second Amendment in accordance with the understandings of the Americans who ratified it: Heller marks the “Triumph of Originalism.” Others saw the case

* Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Professor of Law, Yale University. For comments on the draft, I thank Bruce Ackerman, Akhil Amar, Jack Balkin, Joshua Cohen, Denny Curtis, Ariela Dubler, Barry Friedman, Mark Graber, Sophia Lee, Sandy Levinson, Robert Post, Judith Resnik, Seana Shiffrin, Neil Siegel, Steve Teles, Mary Ziegler, and participants in the Yale Law School faculty workshop. I was greatly fortunate to have the research assistance of Jennifer Bennett, as well as Ady Barkan, Dov Fox, and Hunter Smith.


3 U.S. CONST. amend. II (“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”).


very differently, observing that the Court had interpreted the Second Amendment in accordance with the convictions of the twentieth-century gun-rights movement and so had demonstrated the ascendancy of the living Constitution. The two accounts of the decision stand in some tension. One views *Heller*’s authority as emanating from the deliberations of eighteenth-century Americans, while the other views the constitutional debates of twentieth-century Americans as decisive.

What kind of authority did the Court exercise when it struck down the District of Columbia’s handgun ban as violating the Second Amendment? On the originalism view, the Court is merely enforcing the judgments of eighteenth-century Americans, who, in an epochal act of constitutional lawmaking, ratified a Bill of Rights that forbids handgun bans such as the District of Columbia’s. On the popular constitutionalism view, the Court itself is deciding whether handgun bans are consistent with the best understanding of our constitutional tradition; the determination is made in the present and responds to the beliefs and values of living Americans who identify with the commitments and traditions of their forbears. In the first case, the Court stands above the fray, disinterested, merely executing the commands of Americans long deceased. In the second case, the Court is normatively engaged in matters about which living Americans passionately disagree, enforcing its own convictions about the best understanding of a living constitutional tradition to which *Heller* contributes. On this account, *Heller, through* its originalism, participates in what Justice Scalia refers to in his *Lawrence* dissent as “the culture war.”

Relating these two competing accounts of the opinion, this Comment shows how *Heller*’s originalism enforces understandings of the Second Amendment that were forged in the late twentieth century through popular constitutionalism. It situates originalism’s claim to ground judicial decisionmaking outside of politics in the constitutional politics of the late twentieth century, and demonstrates how *Heller* is difficult to imagine a clearer or more thoroughgoing endorsement of original public meaning originalism.

---

6 Posting of Jack Balkin to Balkinization, http://balkin.blogspot.com/2008/06/this-decision-will-cost-american-lives.html (June 27, 2008, 00:08) (“[T]he result in *Heller* would have been impossible without . . . social movement actors who, over a period of about 35 years, succeeded in changing Americans’ minds about the meaning of the Second Amendment . . . . This is living constitutionalism in action.”); Dave Kopel, *Conservative Activists Key to DC Handgun Decision*, HUMAN EVENTS, June 27, 2008, http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=27229 (reporting that the author — a member of the Cato Institute who helped argue *Heller* — attributes both its result and its originalist reasoning to twentieth-century social movements); Posting of Adam Winkler to The Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adam-winkler/justice-scalias-living-co_b_109728.html (June 27, 2008, 21:17) (“[W]hat explains the reasonable regulations that Scalia’s opinion recognizes? America’s living tradition of the right to bear arms.”).

7 *Lawrence*, 539 U.S. at 602 (Scalia, J., dissenting) (quoted supra p. 191).
respects claims and compromises forged in social movement conflict over the right to bear arms in the decades after Brown v. Board of Education. 8

The Comment offers this reading of the opinion in two steps. Part I begins by examining the temporal locus of authority in the Heller opinion itself. In Heller, the dissenters insist the Second Amendment is concerned primarily with militia and military matters, whereas the majority reads the amendment as codifying an individual right of self-defense that enables citizens to protect themselves, their families, and their homes against crime. The majority presents this account as the original public meaning of the Second Amendment, yet draws upon evidence that may incorporate understandings that emerged long after the founding. This possibility becomes more pronounced as the Court explains how it will enforce the Second Amendment’s right to bear arms. Heller holds that government cannot deprive citizens of traditional weapons of self-defense, but may ban civilian use of military weapons, even if this means that the right to bear arms may no longer be effectively exercised for the republican purpose of resisting tyranny that the “prefatory clause” discusses. 9 It is, to say the least, striking that an originalist interpretation of the Second Amendment would treat civic republican understandings of the amendment as antiquated, and refuse to protect the arms a militia needs to defend against tyranny. What guides the majority’s judgments about how to enforce the right to bear arms?

To examine more closely the authority Heller exercises in enforcing the right to bear arms, this Comment looks beyond the text of the Heller opinion itself to the decades of social movement conflict that preceded the decision. This history illustrates how contest over the Constitution’s meaning can endow courts with authority to change the way they interpret its provisions. The effort to persuade — and to capture institutions that can authoritatively pronounce law — can prompt mobilization, countermobilization, coalition, and compromise, a process that can forge and discipline new understandings that courts engaged in responsive interpretation recognize as the Constitution. 10

---


9 See U.S. CONST. amend. II (“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”).

10 This Comment builds on earlier work exploring how movement conflict helps guide the Constitution’s development and how responsive interpretation helps sustain its democratic authority. See Reva B. Siegel, Constitutional Culture, Social Movement Conflict and Constitutional Change: The Case of the De Facto ERA, 94 CAL. L. REV. 1323 (2006) [hereinafter Siegel, Constitutional Culture]; Reva B. Siegel, The Right’s Reasons: Constitutional Conflict and the Spread of Woman-Protective Antiabortion Argument, 57 DUKE L.J. (forthcoming 2008); Reva B. Siegel, Text in Contest: Gender and the Constitution from a Social Movement Perspective, 150 U. PA. L. REV. 297 (2001) [hereinafter Siegel, Text in Contest]; see also Jack M. Balkin & Reva B. Siegel, Princi-
These practices of democratic constitutionalism enable mobilized citizens to contest and shape popular beliefs about the Constitution’s original meaning and so confer upon courts the authority to enforce the nation’s foundational commitments in new ways.\textsuperscript{11}

To show how such processes helped shape the right \textit{Heller} enforces, Part II of this Comment examines chapters of American constitutional history not discussed in \textit{Heller} — debates about the Second Amendment that transpired in the shadow of \textit{Brown v. Board of Education}. Exploring this social movement history, we learn how, in the wake of \textit{Brown}, citizens made claims on a Second Amendment concerned with law and order and self-defense; how, during the 1980s, a growing coalition of citizens came to assert their convictions about the Second Amendment as the original understanding; and why, by the 1990s, proponents of this law-and-order Second Amendment came to differentiate their claims from those of the modern militia movement, emphasizing that the Second Amendment entitled the citizen to arms needed to defend his family against crime, not against the government. The Second Amendment’s twentieth-century history shows how political conflict can both motivate and discipline the claims that mobilized citizens make on the text and history of the Constitution. These contemporary struggles help explain the shape of the right \textit{Heller} enforces. In the process, they illuminate how authority to enforce the original understanding depends on contemporary public convictions.

In analyzing the conflict leading up to \textit{Heller}, Part III of this Comment provides a positive and interpretive account of how the boundary between constitutional law and constitutional politics has been negotiated in recent decades. \textit{Heller} depicts its authority as forged in one epochal act of eighteenth-century lawmaking. The twentieth-century history considered in this Comment suggests that, in important part, \textit{Heller}’s originalist authority for protecting weaponry popularly used for self-defense, but not for militia purposes, is responsive to contemporary constitutional deliberation — forged in the very culture wars Justice Scalia insists should play no part in constitutional interpretation.

The result is not license of the kind Justice Scalia fears. This Comment’s reading of \textit{Heller} demonstrates that when courts apprehend the history of constitutional lawmaking through constitutional politics,
both guide and constrain the ways courts enforce the Constitution. If we analyze the practices of democratic constitutionalism that help make \textit{Heller} law, we can see forms of discipline and discretion that narratives of originalism occlude.

I. THE TEMPORAL LOCUS OF CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY IN \textit{Heller}

[The Great Divide with regard to constitutional interpretation is . . . between original meaning (whether derived from Framers’ intent or not) and current meaning. The ascendant school of constitutional interpretation affirms the existence of what is called The Living Constitution, a body of law that . . . changes from age to age, in order to meet the needs of a changing society. And it is the judges who determine those needs and “find” that changing law. Seems familiar, doesn’t it? Yes, it is the common law returned, but infinitely more powerful than what the old common law ever pretended to be, for now it trumps even the statutes of democratic legislatures.


Justice Scalia has long advocated originalism on the grounds that it constrains judicial discretion and so enables judges to enforce the Constitution as law, not politics. In his view, judges should interpret the Constitution to enforce its original and “fixed meaning,” without taking into consideration “current societal values” or the judge’s own preferences.\footnote{See Antonin Scalia, \textit{Originalism: The Lesser Evil}, 57 U. CIN. L. REV. 849, 854 (1989) (discussed infra note 137).} In \textit{Heller}, Justice Scalia reaffirms this account of the judge as a kind of amanuensis for those who adopted the Constitution:

The very enumeration of the right takes out of the hands of government — even the Third Branch of Government — the power to decide on a case-by-case basis whether the right is \textit{really worth} insisting upon. A constitutional guarantee subject to future judges’ assessments of its usefulness is no constitutional guarantee at all. Constitutional rights are enshrined with the scope they were understood to have when the people adopted them, whether or not future legislatures or (yes) even future judges think that scope too broad.\footnote{\textit{Heller}, 128 S. Ct. at 2821 (denouncing an interest-balancing test proposed by Justice Breyer). To illustrate his claim, Justice Scalia discusses the application of the First Amendment in Skokie, Illinois — a rather odd example of the unchanging scope of rights, as the text of the First Amendment is expressly addressed to “Congress,” and does not mention the states. See id.}

Justice Scalia depicts a judge interpreting the Constitution as implementing directives the judge has had no normative role in deter-
mining. This picture of constitutional interpretation is in considerable tension with the reasoning of *Heller* itself. *Heller*’s account of the Second Amendment’s original public meaning invokes authorities from before and after the founding, relies on common law–like reasoning, endows judges with vast amounts of interpretive discretion, and, in these respects, resembles the practice of living constitutionalism that Justice Scalia often condemns.

In *Heller*, both the majority and dissenting opinions appeal to the Second Amendment’s text and history, yet offer very different accounts of the amendment’s purpose and reach. The dissenting Justices emphasize the Second Amendment’s republican purposes, depicting the amendment as a guarantee against government tyranny. They assert that the “Second Amendment . . . was a response to concerns raised during the ratification of the Constitution that the power of Congress to disarm the state militias and create a national standing army posed an intolerable threat to the sovereignty of the several States.”

The dissenters maintain that the Second Amendment protects only “a right to use and possess arms in conjunction with service in a well-regulated militia,” and not “the right to possess and use guns for nonmilitary purposes like hunting and personal self-defense.” The majority, however, asserts that the Second Amendment preserved the militia by codifying the common law right of self-defense, and “elevates above all other interests the right of law-abiding, responsible citizens to use arms in defense of hearth and home.”

There are temporal oddities in the evidence the majority marshals in support of this claim about the original meaning of the Second Amendment. For example, the majority starts and finishes its argument that “bear arms” has nonmilitary meanings by citing a dissenting opinion that Justice Ginsburg wrote in 1998 that in turn cites a 1998 edition of Black’s Law Dictionary. This is perhaps the most promi-

---

15 See, e.g., id. at 2789–90, 2799; id. at 2824–25 (Stevens, J., dissenting).
16 See U.S. CONST. amend. II (“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”) (emphasis added).
17 *Heller*, 128 S. Ct. at 2822 (Stevens, J., dissenting); see also id. at 2823 (citing United States v. Miller, 307 U.S. 174 (1939)).
18 Id. at 2831.
19 Id. at 2822.
20 Id. at 2801 (majority opinion) (“[T]he Second Amendment’s prefatory clause announces the purpose for which the right was codified: to prevent elimination of the militia.”).
21 Id. at 2821.
22 Id. at 2793 (citing Muscarello v. United States, 524 U.S. 125, 143 (Ginsburg, J., dissenting)); see also id. at 2794. Sensible of the temporal discrepancy, the majority then cites state constitutional provisions it asserts “unambiguously” demonstrate that the “natural meaning” of “bear
nent but surely not the only temporal incongruity in the evidence on which the majority’s account of the original meaning relies. The majority more than once discounts evidence drawn from the amendment’s drafting history, appearing to favor evidence remote in time over evidence proximate in time to the amendment’s ratification. For example, the majority rejects the dissenters’ claim that the military meaning of the phrase “keep and bear Arms” is elucidated by James Madison’s inclusion of a conscientious-objector clause in his original draft of the Second Amendment (“but no person religiously scrupulous of bearing arms, shall be compelled to render military service in person”), observing “[i]t is always perilous to derive the meaning of an adopted provision from another provision deleted in the drafting process.” In debating the amendment’s purpose, the majority again discounts evidence from “the drafting history of the Second Amendment — the various proposals in the state conventions and the debates in Congress,” observing, “[i]t is dubious to rely on such history to interpret a text that was widely understood to codify a pre-existing right.” To demonstrate that it was “widely understood” that the Second Amendment codified this preexisting, individual right of self-defense, the majority opinion examines sources that range into the second half of the nineteenth century. When Justice Stevens chides the majority for relying on the amendment’s post-ratification history to establish its purpose and meaning, the majority contemptuously explains that its reliance on these sources is “to determine the public understanding of a legal text in the period after its enactment or ratification.”

Justice Scalia has a sound basis in democratic theory for privileging the public’s understanding of the amendment over its framers’ — it was the public’s vote that made the Constitution law — but the

arms” is the same as its historical meaning; the sources cited do not supply unambiguous support for its claims, and a number are from a later period. See id. at 2793.

By contrast, Heller’s dissenters rely on a usage study of more than 100 texts that employed the term “bear arms” in the period between the Declaration of Independence and the adoption of the Second Amendment to establish that the term was regularly used in a military context. See id. at 2828 n.9 (Stevens, J., dissenting).

23 Id. at 2796 (majority opinion).
24 Id. at 2804 (emphasis added); see also id. (discussing “our longstanding view that the Bill of Rights codified venerable, widely understood liberties”); id. at 2798 (observing that the English Bill of Rights “has long been understood to be the predecessor to our Second Amendment”).
25 See, e.g., id. at 2797 (citing United States v. Cruikshank, 92 U.S. 542 (1876); id. at 2802 (citing Robertson v. Baldwin, 165 U.S. 275 (1897))).
26 Id. at 2837 n.28 (Stevens, J., dissenting).
27 Id. at 2805 (majority opinion).
28 Cf. Scalia, supra note 12, at 38 (“I will consult the writings of some men who happened to be delegates to the Constitutional Convention . . . . I do so, however, not because they were Framers and therefore their intent is authoritative and must be the law, but rather because their writings, like those of other intelligent and informed people of the time, display how the text of the Constitution was originally understood.”).
question remains how the interpreter establishes what the public’s understanding of the relevant constitutional text was. Justice Scalia himself acknowledges that the writings of the framers may be probative of the text’s public meaning.29 Given this, is there reason to favor popular views of the amendment one hundred years after its ratification?30 Either the evidence the majority marshals to demonstrate that it was “widely understood” that the Second Amendment codified an individual right of self-defense accurately captures the understanding of those who ratified the amendment in 1791, or the majority is presenting as the original public meaning an understanding of the amendment that emerged in common law–like fashion in the decades after the amendment was ratified.

If these questions about the temporal locus of authority in *Heller* haunt the majority’s account of the amendment’s original understanding, they dominate its claims about the scope of the right the Second Amendment protects. The majority simply declares that the Constitution allows many familiar forms of gun control regulation:

> [N]othing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill, or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings, or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms.31

What authority supports this claim? Does the common law right of self-defense that the Second Amendment codifies continue to evolve in history? If so, what kind of constraint on judicial interpretation does the original public understanding provide? Who decides which gun control laws are constitutionally forbidden and which ones are allowed?32 Without answering any of these questions, the majority then

29 *Id.*

30 See *Heller*, 128 S. Ct. at 2812 (using as authority a treatise from 1891). Cf. Akhil Reed Amar, *The Supreme Court, 2007 Term—Comment: Heller, HLR, and Holistic Legal Reasoning*, 122 HARV. L. REV. 145, 173 (2008) (“But if a future twenty-third-century historian seeks to understand the 1960s, I hope she does not treat the 1980s as decisive evidence. Even if most commentators in the years after 1791 read the Second Amendment through the prism of English common law and individual rights of self-defense, this approach may well have been anachronistic and incorrect.”).


announces “another important limitation on the right to keep and carry arms,” which it derives from two apparently unrelated sources of constitutional authority. It notes that United States v. Miller said that “the sorts of weapons protected [by the Second Amendment] were those ‘in common use at the time,’” and then observes “[w]e think that limitation is fairly supported by the historical tradition of prohibiting the carrying of ‘dangerous and unusual weapons.’” The majority imputes a limitation on the weapons the Second Amendment protects to a passage in Miller that discusses arms the militia employed without imposing any such limitation; it then declares this imputed limitation confirmed by Blackstone’s discussion of the kinds of weapons the common law allowed individuals to carry. The resulting amalgam expresses a common law restriction on the right to bear arms (adopted either in 1769, 1791, 1939, or 2008) in the positive law language of original expected application — a restriction in some tension with the majority’s earlier observation that the Second Amendment extends to arms that were not in existence at the time of the founding.

More remarkably, the restriction the majority adopts renders the right the Second Amendment protects useless for its textually enumerated military purpose — a point the majority goes out of its way to emphasize. The majority insists that the Second Amendment doesn’t protect “weapons that are most useful in military service,” even if it means that the right to bear arms can no longer be exercised for the republican purpose of preventing tyranny that the text specifies:

It may be objected that if weapons that are most useful in military service — M-16 rifles and the like — may be banned, then the Second Amendment right is completely detached from the prefatory clause. But as we have said, the conception of the militia at the time of the Second Amendment’s ratification was the body of all citizens capable of military service, who would bring the sorts of lawful weapons that they possessed at home to militia duty. It may well be true today that a militia, to be as effective as militias in the 18th century, would require sophisticated arms that are

Gun Control, NEW REPUBLIC, Aug. 27, 2008, at 32, 34 (observing that the reach of the opinion is “up for grabs”).  
33 Heller, 128 S. Ct. at 2817.  
35 Heller, 128 S. Ct. at 2817 (quoting Miller, 307 U.S. at 179).  
36 Miller, 307 U.S. at 179 (“These show plainly enough that the Militia comprised all males physically capable of acting in concert for the common defense. ‘A body of citizens enrolled for military discipline.’ And further, that ordinarily when called for service these men were expected to appear bearing arms supplied by themselves and of the kind in common use at the time.”).  
37 See Heller, 128 S. Ct. at 2791–92 (“Some have made the argument, bordering on the frivolous, that only those arms in existence in the 18th century are protected by the Second Amendment. We do not interpret constitutional rights that way. . . . [T]he Second Amendment extends, prima facie, to all instruments that constitute bearable arms, even those that were not in existence at the time of the founding.”).
highly unusual in society at large. Indeed, it may be true that no amount of small arms could be useful against modern-day bombers and tanks. But the fact that modern developments have limited the degree of fit between the prefatory clause and the protected right cannot change our interpretation of the right.\(^{38}\)

In this remarkable passage, the majority imposes restrictions on the kinds of weapons protected by the Second Amendment that the majority concedes would disable exercise of the right for the amendment’s textually enunciated purposes. How could an originalist interpretation of the Second Amendment exclude from its protection the kinds of weapons necessary to resist tyranny — the republican purpose the text of the Second Amendment discusses and, on the majority’s own account, “the purpose for which the right was codified”\(^{39}\)? In these passages Justice Scalia seems to apply something other than an original “public understanding” analysis.

A glimpse of a different form of authority the opinion is exercising comes into view in the majority’s discussion of stare decisis. The majority asserts its account of the Second Amendment is not inconsistent with the Court’s decision in *United States v. Miller*\(^{40}\) — and then quickly abandons the effort to reconcile the two, breaking into a direct attack on *Miller*:

As for the “hundreds of judges” who have relied on the view of the Second Amendment Justice Stevens claims we endorsed in *Miller*: If so, they over-read *Miller*. And their erroneous reliance upon an uncontested and virtually unreasoned case cannot nullify the reliance of millions of Americans (as our historical analysis has shown) upon the true meaning of the right to keep and bear arms. In any event, it should not be thought that the cases decided by these judges would necessarily have come out differently under a proper interpretation of the right.\(^{41}\)

What kind of voice emerges in this attack on *Miller*? The majority seems to identify with “the reliance of millions of Americans . . . upon the true meaning of the right to keep and bear arms,” dismissing the “erroneous reliance” of “hundreds of judges” on Supreme Court precedent as immaterial to a “true” understanding of the amendment. Here the Court is not dispassionately analyzing evidence of the original “public understanding,” or enforcing a judicial, common law under-

\(^{38}\) *Id.* at 2817.

\(^{39}\) *Id.* at 2801 (“[T]he Second Amendment’s prefatory clause announces the purpose for which the right was codified: to prevent elimination of the militia. The prefatory clause does not suggest that preserving the militia was the only reason Americans valued the ancient right; most undoubtedly thought it even more important for self-defense and hunting. But the threat that the new Federal Government would destroy the citizens’ militia by taking away their arms was the reason that right — unlike some other English rights — was codified in a written Constitution.”).

\(^{40}\) See *id.* at 2815–16.

\(^{41}\) *Id.* at 2815 n.24 (citation omitted).
standing of the Second Amendment, but instead declaring the amend-
ment’s “true meaning” in a full-throated populist voice. The *Heller*
majority claims to derive its authority to enforce the Second Amend-
ment solely from epochal acts of constitutional lawmaking in the
eighteenth century. But as this passage makes plain, *Heller* also takes
guidance from the lived experience and passionate convictions of
Americans in times since the founding — convictions and experience
the majority is prepared to elevate over the considered views of “hun-
dreds of judges” in the twentieth century.

II. A SECOND AMENDMENT SOCIAL MOVEMENT HISTORY:
GUN RIGHTS, ORIGINALISM, AND THE CULTURE WARS

To this point, this analysis of *Heller* has considered different kinds
of constitutional authority that might be at work in the opinion —
positive lawmaking associated with the Second Amendment’s eight-
teenth-century ratification and incremental articulation of a tradition of
the kind associated with common law adjudication. In fact, the state
constitutions, treatises, and other evidence cited in *Heller* suggest that
the temporal forms and social sources of constitutional authority are
quite diverse. Judges who engage in common law reasoning about the
Constitution may interpret its text in response to claims about its
meaning that citizens and elected officials propose.42

What do we learn about the forms of authority the Court exercised
in *Heller* if we look outside the opinion to the passionate national de-
bate that preceded the Court’s decision? *Heller* invites this inquiry
when it appeals to popular conviction — to “the reliance of millions of
Americans . . . upon the true meaning of the right to keep and bear
arms” — to limit the authority of precedent on which “hundreds of
judges” have relied.43 This mode of reasoning sounds in popular con-
stitutionalism. More precisely, it is judicial interpretation of the Con-
stitution that is responsive to popular constitutionalism. Elsewhere I
have shown how, in American constitutional culture, social movement
conflict can motivate as well as discipline new claims about the Con-
stitution’s meaning, and how responsive interpretation by public offi-
cials can transmute constitutional politics into new forms of constitu-
tional law.44 Popular debate over the Second Amendment offers
striking evidence of these dynamic features of our constitutional order

42 See Siegel, *Text in Contest*, supra note 10, at 299–300; see also id. at 314 (“Outside the court-
house, the Constitution’s text plays a significant role in eliciting and focusing normative disputes
among Americans about . . . rights under the Constitution — a dynamic that serves to communi-
cate these newly crystallizing understandings and expectations about . . . rights to judges inter-
preting the Constitution inside the courthouse door.”).

43 *Heller*, 551 U.S. at 2815 n.24.

and sheds light on the forms of responsive authority judges may exercise, even when invoking original understanding as a warrant for judicial review. The exercise illuminates relations between constitutional politics and constitutional law otherwise not legible in *Heller*.

In these twentieth-century struggles we can learn about the meaning of the Second Amendment to its contemporary proponents. The history provides a different perspective on the kinds of authority the Court exercises when it conceives of protecting weapons for self-defense as the core purpose of the Second Amendment and when it refuses to extend the amendment’s protection to weaponry a militia might employ today. When we read the *Heller* opinion in light of the decades of social movement conflict that preceded it, it is possible to see how decisions enforcing the original understanding of the Constitution can participate in a twentieth-century “culture war.”

### A. Great Society Advocates for Gun Control

The modern quest for gun control and the gun rights movement it triggered were born in the shadow of *Brown*. Directly and indirectly, conflicts over civil rights have shaped modern understandings of the Second Amendment.

Contemporary debate over gun control began in the 1960s, when President Johnson called for restrictions on firearms sales in the wake of President Kennedy’s assassination. The National Rifle Association (NRA) was easily able to spur opposition to the proposed measures. In the 1950s and 1960s, guns were popular, distributed by the government, and glamorized by the media. Even so, there was sig-

---

45 See Post & Siegel, *Originalism As a Political Practice*, supra note 10.

46 *Lee Kennett & James Laverne Anderson, The Gun in America: The Origins of a National Dilemma* 231 (1975) (“Within a week of President Kennedy’s death a dozen firearms bills had been placed in the congressional hoppers.”). A Hein Online title search for law review articles on the “Second Amendment,” “bear arms,” or “gun control” shows that publications begin steadily to increase in the 1960s. See infra note 157.

47 *Alexander DeConde, Gun Violence in America: The Struggle for Control* 175 (2001); *Kennett & Anderson, supra* note 46, at 231–43; see also Stanley Meisler, *Get Your Gun from the Army*, 198 *Nation* 568, 569 (1964) (noting that members of the NRA get “a subscription to the NRA’s *American Rifleman*, a chance to buy Army guns, a massive public relations campaign that included a float in the 1963 Tournament of Roses Parade saying, ‘The Bill of Rights — Freedom to Keep and Bear Arms’ and, most important, some lobbying on their behalf in the halls of state legislatures and Congress”); Drew Pearson & Jack Anderson, *The Washington Merry-Go-Round: Gun Industry Holds Capitol Hill at Bay*, WASH. POST, Apr. 13, 1968, at D15 (“More moving than the memory of President John F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King, apparently, has been the lobbying of the National Rifle Association which, for six years, has blocked every move on Capitol Hill to curb the indiscriminate sale of firearms.”).


49 In 1956, *Life* magazine ran a story on “the western film genre, noting that ‘in Hollywood eight films with ‘gun’ in the title have been completed and actors are learning how to shoot and be shot,’” and “each evening, a television critic in *The Nation* reported, ‘twenty to thirty million
significant public support for gun control. And the case for gun control grew in urgency in the next several years as the nation was shaken by civil rights conflict, riots in the nation’s cities, rising crime rates, campus slayings, and struggles over the Vietnam war — conflicts that imbued guns with a variety of racial meanings. In 1968, with the assassinations of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., and presidential candidate Senator Robert Kennedy, Congress was ready to take action on the President’s request to impose restrictions on certain classes of purchasers and to bar the interstate mail order sale of guns.

American homes rock with the sound of sudden gunfire.” KENNETT & ANDERSON, supra note 46, at 218; see also DECONDE, supra note 47, at 161 (reporting the depiction of gun violence in the 1950s on the "new medium of television," where "[n]ight and day with the press of a button Americans could now view programs featuring graphic firearms violence," including "Gunsmoke, Have Gun Will Travel, The Rifleman, and Wanted Dead or Alive").

50 For example, in 1959, Gallup reported 59% of the public in support of a handgun ban. See sources cited infra note 74 and accompanying text.

51 See DECONDE, supra note 47, at 173–84.

52 See Peter Bart, Los Angeles Whites Voice Fear, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 17, 1965, at 1 (reporting on “groups of white men in gas stations and stores talking about ‘what they’ll do if the niggers attack,’” and quoting an observer describing the “fantastic run on gun stores” as going “beyond the instinct for self protection” and the “smell of violence in the air in both the white and Negro communities . . . .”); Pearson & Anderson, supra note 47 (reporting that “the gun lobby has started an ugly whispering campaign that the gun control bill would prevent white people from buying weapons to defend their homes against Negro rioters”). See generally Vesla M. Weaver, Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy, 21 STUD. AM. POL. DEV. 230, 247 (2007) (discussing the ways in which conservatives reacting to different forms of violence “attached civil rights to lawlessness”).

At least some gun control efforts during this period seem to have been racially motivated and were resisted by some members of the black community. See, e.g., Jane Rhodes, Fanning the Flames of Racial Discord: The National Press and the Black Panther Party, 4 HARV. INT’L J. PRESS/POL. 95, 95 (1999) (discussing a California bill that was motivated “in part to stifle the [Black] Panthers’ open use of guns” and the Panthers’ protest of that bill at the California state legislature); BLACK Panther PARTY, PLATFORM AND PROGRAM: WHAT WE WANT, WHAT WE BELIEVE (1966), reprinted in THE BLACK PANTHERS SPEAK 2, 3 (Philip S. Foner ed., 1970) (“The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self defense.”). But racial conflict did not become entrenched in these ways. A black nationalist right to bear arms did not become the focal point of organizing in the African-American community. See Black Panther Party, Platform and Program: What We Want, What We Believe (1972), http://www.stanford.edu/group/blackpanthers/history.shtml (omitting reference to the Second Amendment). Instead, there has been substantial support for gun control. See PEW RESEARCH CTR. FOR PEOPLE & THE PRESS, HANDGUNS: PUBLIC REJECTS A BAN — BUT SUPPORTS CONTROLS (2008), http://pewresearch.org/pubs/835/handgun-ban ("[F]ully three-quarters of African Americans (75%) say controlling gun ownership is more important [than protecting] the rights of Americans to own guns."); Paul M. Barrett, NAACP Suit Puts Race on Table in Gun Debate, WALL ST. J., Aug. 13, 1999, at B1 (discussing the NAACP’s suit against gun manufacturers, which claimed that “African-Americans have been ‘disproportionately injured’ by the gun industry’s ‘negligent marketing’” (quoting complaint in NAACP v. Acusport, Inc., 271 F. Supp. 2d 435 (E.D.N.Y. 2003)).
In the 1960s, it was a matter of ordinary professional reason that Congress had power to adopt restrictions of this sort.\textsuperscript{53} Counsel to the House Subcommittee on Postal Operations was succinct in explaining the governing law:

The second amendment to the Constitution of the United States is only 27 words and seems plain on its face. . . . The reference to a “well regulated Militia” would seem to govern the phrase “the right of the people to keep and bear Arms” which means in its context the right of the States to organize a Militia.\textsuperscript{54}

Committee reports concluded similarly.\textsuperscript{55}

Yet, even if no court would impose Second Amendment limits on gun control legislation, the President’s advisers still worried about selling a federal gun control bill to the American public. The plan they hit upon involved sending a group of Hollywood cowboys — Kirk Douglas, James Stewart, Gregory Peck, Hugh O’Brian and Charlton Heston — to appear on the late night \textit{Joey Bishop Show} and urge Americans to support the President’s gun control bill.\textsuperscript{56} The civil rights concerns of the bill’s proponents were unmistakable. “President John F. Kennedy was murdered by a rifle. Martin Luther King was murdered by a rifle. Medgar Evers was murdered by a rifle,” the cowboys emphasized, while reassuring the TV audience that the bill’s purpose was “not to deprive the sportsman of his hunting gun” nor

\textsuperscript{53} See, e.g., S. REP. NO. 90-1097 (1968), reprinted in 1968 U.S.C.C.A.N. 2112, 2169 (“[T]he decided cases, both at the Federal and State levels, reveal no constitutional barrier to the passage of [federal gun control regulation]. To the contrary, they afford ample precedent for its validity.”). The Court had sustained Congress’s authority, under the Commerce Clause and the Second Amendment, to enact gun control laws during the New Deal. See United States v. Miller, 307 U.S. 174, 178 (1939) (“In the absence of any evidence tending to show that possession or use of a ‘shotgun having a barrel of less than eighteen inches in length’ at this time has some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well regulated militia, we cannot say that the Second Amendment guarantees the right to keep and bear such an instrument.”). Lower courts understood Miller’s interpretation of the Second Amendment as identifying a collective right to militia-based weapons. See, e.g., United States v. Warin, 530 F.2d 103, 106 (6th Cir. 1976) (“It is clear that the Second Amendment guarantees a collective rather than an individual right.”); United States v. Casson, 288 F. Supp. 86, 88 (D. Del. 1968) (“In the absence of some showing that the possession or use of the shotgun bears some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well regulated Militia, the Second Amendment does not guarantee defendant the right to keep and bear such a firearm.”); Galvan v. Superior Court, 452 P.2d 930, 940 (Cal. 1969) (“The claim that legislation regulating weapons violates the Second Amendment has been rejected by every court which has ruled on the question.”).

\textsuperscript{54} Mail Order Gun Control: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Postal Operations of the H. Comm. on Post Office and Civil Serv., 90th Cong. 16 (1968) (reprinting legal memorandum on “The Right To Bear Arms”); id. at 17 (reviewing text, ratification history, and case law and concluding “[t]here is little or no case law on this subject. The principal case involved a sawed off shotgun which the Court held was not vital to the maintenance of a ‘well regulated Militia.’”).

\textsuperscript{55} See, e.g., S. REP. NO. 90-1097.

\textsuperscript{56} Emilie Raymond, From My Cold, Dead Hands: Charlton Heston and American Politics 179 (2006).
deny to “any responsible citizen his constitutional right to own a firearm.” At this point even the NRA was prepared to support federal gun control laws, and Congress enacted two rounds of legislation in 1968 restricting high-risk purchasers, prohibiting sale of firearms through the mail, barring import of certain guns, and creating the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms within the Treasury Department.

But the 1968 gun control legislation represented at best a qualified victory for President Johnson, as it grew out of criticisms of his Great Society initiatives and was enacted encumbered with civil rights restrictions he opposed. Though willing to support gun control in 1968, many Americans — recoiling from social unrest, protests, riots, and rising crime rates — were losing confidence in the Great Society policies of gun control’s liberal proponents. An Administration committed to expanding opportunities for all Americans was on the defensive and had embraced gun control as part of a strategy to reduce crime by preventing crime. The President’s conservative critics thought the Administration’s gun control initiative ineffectual or insufficient and sought harsher controls on the “criminal.” They opposed recent Warren Court decisions according criminal defendants constitutional rights — “de facto civil rights” — and larded the 1968 bill with restrictions


58 The Executive Vice President of the NRA testified before Congress that no “sane American, who calls himself an American, can object to placing in [the Gun Control Act of 1968] the instrument which killed [President Kennedy].” Keersten Heskin, Easier Than Obtaining a Driver’s License: The Federal Licensing of Gun Dealers, 46 FLA. L. REV. 805, 819 n.123 (1994); see also NRA Staff, Congress Threshes Out Gun Law Issue: Senators Defeat Four Registration and Licensing Attempts, A M. RIFLEMAN, Nov. 1968, at 22, 22 (“[W]hile the interstate features of the measure ‘appear unduly restrictive and unjustified in their application to law-abiding citizens, the measure as a whole appears to be one that the sportsmen of America can live with and we are particularly glad to see 3 positive recommendations of the NRA become law.’” (quoting NRA Executive Vice President Franklin L. Orth)).


60 Weaver, supra note 52, at 251 (“Ultimately, liberals betrayed their early solidaristic calls for social reform and warring on poverty and, by the end of the 1960s, they began downplaying underlying causes, arguing instead for more gun control. . . . By 1968, Democrats had aligned themselves with the ‘law and order’ program and were trying desperately to mimic the Republicans.”).

61 Yale Kamisar, How Earl Warren’s Twenty-Two Years in Law Enforcement Affected His Work as Chief Justice, 3 OHIO ST. J. CRIM. L. 11, 25 (2005) (“[T]hat so many of the coerced confession cases ‘were appeals from southern courts, and so many of the defendants powerless blacks cast them as de facto civil rights cases.’” (quoting ED CRAY, CHIEF JUSTICE: A BIOGRAPHY OF EARL WARREN 464 (1997))). An early draft of Chief Justice Warren’s Miranda opinion noted
on them. As a result, the new gun control bill limited rights of the accused to counsel and to protections from interrogation.62 Concerned about the bill’s restrictions on civil rights and its challenge to the Court’s authority, Professor Alexander Bickel publicly urged the Senate to vote against the bill.63

Encumbered with these restrictions on defendants’ rights, the 1968 Act embodied a view of the criminally accused that was anathema to gun control’s civil rights supporters, who opposed Jim Crow justice and the view that there were innate and identifiable “criminal classes” that government should control.64 A congressman protested the contradictions of the 1968 Act: “Passing this legislation as a memorial to Sen. Kennedy was grimly ironic, because in life he had not supported it. He had opposed the wiretapping and confession provisions and called for strong gun controls,” observing “[t]here must also be a firm commitment to eliminate the root causes of crime — the sense of despair and hopelessness born of continued privation, poverty, poor education and lack of equal opportunity.”65

But in 1968, Americans were losing confidence in this vision. Campaigning against the Great Society policies of the Johnson-
Humphrey administration, Nixon deplored “the socially suicidal ten-
dency — on the part of many public men — to excuse crime and symp-
pathize with criminal[s] because of past grievances the criminal may
have against society,”66 and intimated “linkages between racial conflict
and lawlessness.”67 “Making no effort to distinguish between street
crime, political protests, and urban riots, Nixon charged that liberals
had promised a Great Society but had delivered great disorder.”68
Soon thereafter, Richard Nixon swept to office on a campaign of “law
and order.”

B. Movement-Countermovement: The Libertarian Second Amendment

The political maelstrom from which the 1968 Act emerged would
shape the debates over gun control that exploded in its wake. The
1970s witnessed the birth of a libertarian movement for Second
Amendment rights, which grew out of conservative “law and order”
challenges to the Great Society.

In the early 1970s, gun control initiatives continued to gather sup-
port, spurred on by the assassination attempt that crippled presidential
candidate George Wallace in 1972 and two more assassination at-
ttempts against President Ford in September of 1975.69 As importantly,
in this period, gun control initiatives were supported by an uneasy coa-
Oligy of law and order conservatives70 and civil rights leadership.71

The National Council to Control Handguns, later Handgun Control,

66 Weaver, supra note 52, at 251 (quoting Richard M. Nixon, Toward Freedom from Fear
(1968), reprinted in 114 CONG. REC. 12936, 12936 (1968)).
67 Id. at 259 (describing a Nixon commercial linking protesters to “violence,” which Nixon ob-
served “hits it right on the nose. It’s all about law and order and the damn Negro-Puerto Rican
groups out there.” (quoting PHILIP A. KLINKNER & ROGERS M. SMITH, THE UNSTEADY
MARCH: THE RISE AND DECLINE OF RACIAL EQUALITY IN AMERICA 292 (1999)) (internal
quotation marks omitted)); see also BAKER, supra note 64, at 244 (“[A]lthough Nixon would not
mention [George] Wallace by name, the Republican would appear as ‘a more respectable alterna-
tive’ to the Alabaman, countering his rhetoric ‘with a velvet-glove version of the mailed fist.’”);
Steven Cann, Politics in Brown and White: Re segregation in America, 88 JUDICATURE 74, 76
(2004) (describing Nixon’s “southern strategy” as “an electoral strategy of the Republican Party to
expand its electoral base by going soft on civil rights”); id. (“Nixon’s former presidential counsel
John W. Dean argues that Rehnquist once defined ‘strict constructionism’ as voting against
criminal defendants and civil rights plaintiffs.”).
68 MICHAEL W. FLAMM, LAW AND ORDER: STREET CRIME, CIVIL UNREST, AND THE
CRISIS OF LIBERALISM IN THE 1960s, at 173 (2005); see also Weaver, supra note 52, at 251, 259.
69 KRISTIN A. GOSS, DISARMED: THE MISSING MOVEMENT FOR GUN CONTROL IN
70 For the 1972 Republican Party platform expressing support for gun control, see infra p. 215.
71 See GOSS, supra note 69, at 166–67 (“Many early gun control leaders were inspired by the
citizen movements for civil rights, women’s rights, and consumer protection that unfolded in the
1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. They thought that a national victory for gun control could be next. Yet
the gun control campaign was beginning to institutionalize nationally at a time when the power
and moral authority of the federal government were waning. By 1974, the War on Poverty and the
premises that inspired it were under attack . . . .”).
Inc., was organized and expressed support for a national ban on handguns.\footnote{GOSS, supra note 69, at 157–62.} Washington, D.C., enacted the handgun ban at issue in \textit{Heller} in 1976.\footnote{D.C. CODE ANN. § 7-2501.01 (LexisNexis 2008).}

But resistance to gun control was growing in the 1970s, both among gun rights activists and in the public at large. After a decade of protests, riots, and rising crime rates, national support for handgun bans dropped — from sixty percent in 1959 to forty-one percent in 1975.\footnote{Gallup’s Pulse of Democracy: Gun Laws, http://www.gallup.com/poll/1645/Guns.aspx (last visited Oct. 5, 2008); see also DECONDE, supra note 47, at 165 (reporting that in 1959 a Gallup poll found that 59\% of Americans “wanted private ownership of handguns outlawed”); \textit{Gun Control Bill Reported in House}, 32 CONG. Q. ALMANAC 406, 407 (1976) (“[I]n a series of lopsided votes, . . . [the House Judiciary Committee] rejected amendments to ban the sale and possession of handguns . . . .”); \textit{Gun Control}, 28 CONG. Q. ALMANAC 524 (1972) (“Any proposal outlawing or drastically restricting the private possession of small arms would stand little chance of passage at this time.” (quoting Robert McClory, H. Subcomm. on the Judiciary) (internal quotation mark omitted)).} The NRA pointed to this shift in public support when President Ford proposed more modest restrictions on the sale of inexpensive handguns (often referred to as “Saturday night specials”).\footnote{Ashley Halsey Jr., \textit{The President’s Stand on Guns}, AM. RIFLEMAN, Aug. 1975, at 23, 23 (discussing news of the Gallup polling on declining support for handgun controls and suggesting that the President was subject to “influences from within the Treasury and the Justice Departments”); cf. supra note 58 (describing NRA support for provisions of the 1968 Gun Control Act).}

With the continuing rise in crime rates,\footnote{James Vorenberg, \textit{The War on Crime: The First Five Years}, ATLANTIC MONTHLY, May 1972, at 63, 63 (reporting a “30 percent increase in the reported crime rate during the first three years of the Nixon Administration”); see also GOSS, supra note 69, at 40 (“By the beginning of 1975, the nation had reached the highest rate of gun violence ever recorded: 16.1 shooting deaths per 100,000.”).} a conservative insurgency in the NRA questioned the organization’s willingness to support even moderate forms of gun control.\footnote{See supra note 58 (describing NRA support for provisions of the 1968 Gun Control Act).} In 1975, Harlon Carter, head of the NRA’s newly created Institute for Legislative Action (ILA), testified against a bill that would tighten federal handgun regulation. His remarks sharply differentiated “law abiding . . . gun owners” from a different group of Americans whom Carter called “criminals”:

\begin{quote}
I do not believe a man is a future criminal just because he owns, or desires to own, a firearm.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Law abiding people, and particularly gun owners, are tired of being blamed for crime. They are sick of being harassed with federal bureaucracy and having their freedom progressively and increasingly chipped away because of the inability or unwillingness of their government officials to deal with those responsible for crime, namely, criminals.
\end{quote}
People in the media, in the Congress, in the courts seem to blame crime on everything in our society except the criminal and want to punish anyone and anything except the criminals. 78

Opposition to gun control was now expressed in law and order frames. The argument for gun rights divided society into two classes — citizen and criminal — and demonstrated deep estrangement from Great Society government. The gun rights argument did not presume the innocence of the poor or the innocence of the accused. 79 Like law and order discourse, the gun rights claim called for individual accountability and asked government to deliver security — not social justice. Unlike law and order discourse, the gun rights claim voiced a libertarian spirit that was increasingly hostile to the government in any guise.

The same year that Harlon Carter testified before Congress, Ronald Reagan, then Governor of California and a board member of Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), 80 published an article in the pages of Guns & Ammo that expressed these convictions in a constitutional register. 81 YAF had recently formed a Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, and an affiliated Second Amend-

---


79 Carter continued: There are very few victims of brutal criminality who wonder or even care about the socioeconomic conditions that may or may not have motivated their attacker. . . . [U]nder our system of justice — or at least as it was designed — the criminal who directly caused that suffering is supposed to pay the consequences. But somehow, it does not work out that way any more.

. . .

I do not believe that it is possible to take enough guns away from criminals to insure the safety of a disarmed public. But if the President is right, if most crime is attributable to a relatively small number of criminals, we can take them — the criminals — out of circulation.

Id. at 2853.


ment Foundation, with which Reagan was no doubt familiar.\textsuperscript{82} Reagan expressed objections to gun control in law and order frames ("Criminals are not dissuaded by soft words, soft judges or easy laws. They are dissuaded by fear and they are prevented from repeating their crimes by death or by incarceration.\textsuperscript{78,83}"), but Reagan also expressed the objection to gun control in constitutional terms. At a time when the legally literate read the text of the Second Amendment as plainly allowing gun regulation,\textsuperscript{84} Reagan read its text as — potentially — plainly prohibiting gun regulation:

The Second Amendment is clear, or ought to be. It appears to leave little if any leeway for the gun control advocate. It reads: "A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

. . . .

The [S]econd [A]mendment gives the individual citizen a means of protection against the despotism of the state. . . . [T]he rights of the individual are pre-eminent.

The founding fathers had seen, as the Declaration of Independence tells us, what a despotic government can do to its own people. Indeed, every American should read the Declaration of Independence before he reads the Constitution and he will see that the Constitution aims at preventing a recurrence of the way George III’s government treated the Colonies.

. . . .

There are those in America today who have come to depend absolutely on government for their security. And when government fails they seek to rectify that failure in the form of granting government more power. So, as government has failed to control crime and violence with the means given it by the Constitution, they seek to give it more power at the expense of the Constitution.

But in doing so, in their willingness to give up their arms in the name of safety, they are really giving up their protection from what has always been the chief source of despotism — government.\textsuperscript{85}

Harlon Carter and Ronald Reagan were harbingers of change. Within two years, conservative members of the NRA led by Carter and comrade Neal Knox conducted what insurgents called a “revolt at Cincinnati,”\textsuperscript{86} challenging incumbent NRA leaders who supported incremental forms of gun control regulation.

\textsuperscript{82} YAF played a key role in spearheading Reagan’s drive for the presidency in 1976 and 1980. See Schneider, supra note 80, at 161.

\textsuperscript{83} Reagan, supra note 81, at 34.

\textsuperscript{84} See supra notes 53–55 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{85} Reagan, supra note 81, at 35.

\textsuperscript{86} Joseph P. Tartaro, Revolt at Cincinnati 39 (1981).
As recounted by Joseph Tartaro of Gun Week, the conservative insurgency was “intent on reorganizing the NRA with the specific purpose of breaking a stranglehold on the ILA and its freedom to defend the Second Amendment.”87 The insurgents understood the constitutional struggle through the prism of the American Revolution. Tartaro reported:

Many pro-gun activists outside of NRA leadership were convinced that gun owners could no longer compromise on legislation designed to restrict the ownership of firearms. Indeed, some of these blamed prevailing statutes on compromises by NRA leadership in the 1930s and 1960s... A classic confrontational situation developed not unlike the schism between the American colonists and the Crown in 1775.88

While restrictions on lobbying by the ILA were at issue, so too were questions of politics and fundraising linked to the organization’s plans to move its headquarters from Washington, D.C., to Colorado Springs, where the NRA was building a complex for sports and conservation.89 Carter’s supporters had in their possession a report on fundraising feasibility that warned:

NRA must attract to its cause powerful leadership and financial support that is today either repelled or put off by NRA’s image as the leader in the fight against gun control... [T]he current media image of the NRA destroys its ability to raise money from foundations, especially the large ones such as Rockefeller, Ford and Mellon.90

Distribution of this report to NRA membership helped Carter in his bid to take over the NRA in a revolt figured in constitutional terms: “As in the days preceding [sic] the Declaration of Independence, the people who populated NRA’s colonies felt themselves unrepresented.”91

What the insurgents wanted was freedom for the ILA to defend “the political, civil and inalienable rights of the American people to keep and bear arms as a common law and Constitutional right both of the individual citizen and of the collective militia.”92 Thereafter, American Rifleman ran an article reporting on the difference between a “collective” right and “individual” right interpretation of the Second Amendment, and insisting that reports of Supreme Court precedents to

87 Id. at 27.
88 Id. at 19.
89 Id.
90 Id. at 21–22 (quoting the fundraising report by Oram International, Inc.).
91 Id. at 24; see also id. at 18 (displaying “Revolutionary War ‘Don’t Tread on Me’ flag as the emblem of a strong pro-gun political position”).
92 Id. at 36.
the contrary were mistaken: the collective right view could not be historically or legally substantiated.93

C. The Coalition Politics of the New Right: Originalism and the Republicans’ Quest for Constitutional Restoration

In the revolt at Cincinnati, Harlon Carter and his compatriots had established the fundamentals of the NRA’s new constitutional politics. What they needed was institutional power to embody this new constitutional understanding in law. In fact, by the time of the Cincinnati revolt, the coalition that would carry them to power was already in place. An emergent New Right movement sought restoration of the Constitution in matters concerning criminal defendants’ rights, gun control, and other “social issues,” including prayer, busing, and abortion.

— In 1974, Richard Viguerie, former executive secretary of YAF, chief fundraiser for George Wallace’s 1972 presidential campaign, and a pioneer in computerized techniques of direct mail fundraising, called a meeting with Terry Dolan and Howard Phillips, formerly of YAF, and Paul Weyrich, who, with the Olin Foundation’s help, had just founded the Heritage Foundation.94 Viguerie planned to use the group’s combined talents — and the mailing lists Viguerie had acquired working for YAF, for Wallace’s campaign against busing,95 and for other con-


95 In beginning his direct mail operation with the donor lists of the Wallace campaign, Viguerie was building a New Right by mobilizing Americans who were estranged from the civil rights rulings of the Warren Court. Wallace was famous for leading white resistance to Brown. See Michael J. Klarman, Brown v. Board: 50 Years Later, HUMAN., Mar.–Apr. 2004, at 24, 28 (“Governor George Wallace of Alabama personified the post-Brown racial fanaticism of southern politics. . . . Wallace declared in his [1962] inaugural address: ‘. . . [S]egregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever’”); see also DAN T. CARTER, FROM GEORGE WALLACE TO NEWT GINGRICH: RACE IN THE CONSERVATIVE COUNTERREVOLUTION 1963–1994, at 48 (1996) (quoting a radio ad for Wallace’s 1970 gubernatorial campaign that observed: “Suppose your wife is driving home at 11 o’clock. She is stopped by a highway patrolman. He turns out to be black. Think about it. . . . Elect George Wallace.”). In his 1972 campaign for the presidency, Wallace expressed these themes in more muted terms, such as through as hostility to busing. See Wallace’s Showing in Primaries Kills Labor’s Kingmaking Role, HARTFORD COURANT, June 7, 1972, at 14 (reporting that Wallace told workers “that stopping busing was more important than overtime, seniority or a union shop”); Tom Wicker, To Bus or Not To Bus, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 17, 1972, at 37 (“[Wallace] entered the race, crying that a vote for him would be a vote against busing.”).
servative clients96 — to invigorate the conservative movement. At the
decade’s end, Viguerie’s magazine, Conservative Digest, described their
successful strategy:

Attention to so-called social issues — abortion, busing, gun rights, pornog-
raphy, crime — has also become central to the growth of the New Right.
But to imagine that the New Right has a fixation on these issues misses
the mark. The New Right is looking for issues that people care about, and
social issues, at least for the present, fit the bill. As [Paul] Weyrich puts it,
“We talk about issues that people care about, like gun control, abortion,
taxes and crime. Yes they’re emotional issues, but that’s better than talk-
ning about capital formation.”97

As Weyrich explained to Time magazine: “In the past, we conserva-
tives have paraded all those Chamber of Commerce candidates with
the Mobil Oil billboards strapped to their backs. It doesn’t work in
middle-class neighborhoods.”98 These conservative strategists helped
draw Protestant and Catholic clergy together to intervene in politics in
defense of faith and family, and a new “moral majority” was born.99

The emerging gun rights movement was fatefuly shaped by its in-
clusion in this New Right coalition and by the direct mail strategies
that Viguerie employed on its behalf. Direct mail strategies provided
Viguerie and his clients financial independence from the Republican
Party and foundation establishment and opened new communicative

Viguerie continued to affiliate with racial conservatives estranged from the Warren Court
after he left the Wallace campaign and began to organize the New Right. See RUSS BELLANT,
THE COORS CONNECTION: HOW COORS FAMILY PHILANTHROPY UNDERMINES DEMOC-
RATIC PLURALISM 16–17 (1991) (describing Viguerie’s attendance at the “1976 convention of the
American Independent Party (AIP) to seek a spot . . . on the national ticket. The AIP . . . was a
coalition that included elements of the Ku Klux Klan, John Birchers . . . , and operatives of the
Liberty Lobby.”).

96 Tim Wyngaard, On the GOP Front: New Breed Battles Old-Timers for Party Funds, EL
PASO HERALD-POST, June 17, 1977, at D-5 (observing that Viguerie started with “the mailing list
of the arch-conservative Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), for which he formerly worked,”
and “[in the next decade he collected and codified, cross-indexed and culled the names of 10 mil-
on American conservatives who would be willing to donate to right-wing causes on the basis of
‘personalized’ letters spewing from the computers”). Viguerie’s clients built their own donor lists.
“But they [couldn’t] take the lists to another direct-mail firm. They [became] Viguerie’s property
as well.” Id.; see also RICHARD A. VIGUERIE & DAVID FRANKE, AMERICA’S RIGHT TURN:
HOW CONSERVATIVES USED NEW AND ALTERNATIVE MEDIA TO TAKE POWER 150 (2004)
(recounting how “the hundreds of thousands of names of Wallace contributors [that Viguerie]
amassed were later used to help conservative Republicans take over the South”).

97 The New Right: A Special Report, CONSERVATIVE DIG., June 1979, at 9, 10.
98 Right On for the New Right, TIME, Oct. 3, 1977, at 24, 26 (internal quotation marks
omitted).
99 See Mobilizing the Moral Majority, CONSERVATIVE DIG., Aug. 1979, at 14; The Pro-
Family Movement: A Special Report, CONSERVATIVE DIG., May–June 1980, at 14. For an ac-
count of the role the conservative strategists of the New Right played in forging a coalition of
Protestants and Catholics aroused to protest secular humanism, the Equal Rights Amendment,
and abortion, see Post & Siegel, Roe Rage, supra note 10, at 420–23.
channels in the public sphere that would allow them to bypass the traditional media.

In the fall of 1975, Viguerie, working with California State Senator H.L. Richardson, founded Gun Owners of America (GOA) and soon after celebrated his direct mail fundraising success, identifying "gun enthusiasts as one of the great untapped money markets for the new right." Through direct mail, GOA used law and order frames expressing fear of the "criminal element" to stimulate gun rights mobilization. A GOA solicitation letter signed by Richardson warned that "if the criminal element knew we could not legally own firearms to protect our families and our property, . . . crime would double," urging "that 'radical,' 'gun-grabbing,' 'soft on crime' politicians must not be allowed to destroy our Constitution and unleash what could well be the most terrifying crime wave in modern history." Richardson would later describe direct mail's power: "Direct mail can tell your story undiluted by the media and unadulterated by your opposition. You can pinpoint your message and call people to action. You can rally an army of support from those unaccustomed to political action." GOA began spending money raised by Viguerie's direct mail campaign in support of political candidates who supported gun rights. At the same time, Viguerie began fundraising on an even larger scale for the NRA, and worked with Harlon Carter of the ILA to build a political donation committee for the NRA modeled on GOA. The Viguerie-Carter relationship coincided with Carter's efforts to move the NRA right.

102 Id. (quoting solicitation letter signed by H.L. Richardson, founder of Gun Owners of America) (internal quotation marks omitted).
103 H.L. Richardson, Political Turn to the Right Would've Been Impossible Without Role of Direct Mail, CONSERVATIVE DIG., June 1981, at 23, 23.
104 Houston, supra note 101.
105 Id.; see also CRAWFORD, supra note 100, at 67–69 (reporting that in 1973 Viguerie handled fundraising for the ILA, bringing in $5.8 million at a cost of $3.2 million and building the organization's list of contributors by 600,000 names, and observing that in the late 1970s, Viguerie raised $12 million for the NRA while also doing direct mail work for the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms and Gun Owners of America).
106 See supra section II.B; see also GOSS, supra note 69, at 172 (describing the creation of NRA's Office of Legislative Affairs, which raised nearly $2 million in a year, and noting how "advocates dissatisfied with what they saw as the NRA's insufficiently hard-line stance created Gun Owners of America, which pulled the NRA in the direction of protecting its right flank"). Martin Durham describes the New Right strategy:

The anti-gun-control National Rifle Association and the anti-abortion National Right to Life Committee were not so willing to give up their political independence, and the New
The Viguerie-Carter working relationship put gun rights advocates in coalition with many other conservative single-issue groups. Together, this emergent coalition helped transform the Republican Party platform on so-called “social issues,” including gun control and the Second Amendment. In 1972, the Republican platform reflected Nixon’s vision and charged state and federal government with responsibility for “prevent[ing] criminal access to all weapons, including special emphasis on cheap, readily- obtainable handguns,” while promising to “[s]afeguard the right of responsible citizens to collect, own and use firearms for legitimate purposes, including hunting, target shooting and self-defense.”107 In 1976, Reagan narrowly lost the Republican nomination to Gerald Ford, and the party’s platform adopted a different approach to gun control and the Constitution: “We support the right of citizens to keep and bear arms. We oppose federal registration of firearms. Mandatory sentences for crimes committed with a lethal weapon are the only effective solution to this problem.”108 Statist law and order talk of the Nixon era gave way to the more libertarian law and order talk of the New Right, of the kind that Reagan, Harlon Carter, and Viguerie were developing.109

2. Originalism and the “Social Issues” of the New Right. — Reagan’s election as President in 1980 raised hopes that this libertarian, law and order understanding of the Second Amendment might soon become law — despite the attempt to assassinate the President only months after his election and the shooting murder of John Lennon.110 In the early 1980s, the town of Morton Grove enacted a handgun ban that the Court, in a closely watched decision, let stand.111 In the Senate, where Reagan’s election swept Republicans to power, conservatives had their first opportunity to refashion the constitutional law under which gun control laws would be judged. Strom Thurmond became chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, replacing Edward Kennedy,112 and Orrin Hatch assumed control of the Subcommittee on

Right was compelled to work with them as best it could. At the same time, it . . . encouraged small groups on the independent organisations’ right — the Gun Owners of America in the first case, the Life Amendment Political Action Committee and the American Life Lobby in the second.

Durham, supra note 94, at 181.


109 See Wyngaard, supra note 96 (discussing role of direct mail in changing the shape of the Republican National Party).


111 GOSS, supra note 69, at 162–65.

112 Id. at 46.

Upon assuming subcommittee chairmanship, Hatch authorized extensive historical research on the Second Amendment and, in February of 1982, issued a report entitled \textit{The Right To Keep and Bear Arms}.\footnote{STAFF OF SUBCOMM. ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE S. COMM. ON THE JUDICIARY, \textit{97th Cong., The Right To Keep and Bear Arms} vii (Comm. Print 1982) (“Immediately upon assuming chairmanship of the Subcommittee on the Constitution, I sponsored the report . . . on the right to keep and bear arms.”). Hatch observed: We did not guess at the purpose of the British 1689 Declaration of Rights; we located the Journals of the House of Commons and private notes of the Declaration’s sponsors, now dead for two centuries. . . . We did not speculate as to the intent of the framers of the second amendment; we examined James Madison’s drafts for it, his handwritten outlines of speeches upon the Bill of Rights . . . . \textit{Id.} at vii-viii.} The report announced: “What the Subcommittee on the Constitution uncovered was clear — and long lost — proof that the second amendment to our Constitution was intended as an individual right of the American citizen to keep and carry arms in a peaceful manner, for protection of himself, his family, and his freedoms.”\footnote{\textit{Id.} at vii-viii.} In 1986, Congress passed the Firearm Owners Protection Act,\footnote{Pub. L. No. 99-308, 100 Stat. 449 (1986) (codified at 18 U.S.C. §§ 921–929 (2006)).} which specifically invoked “the rights of citizens . . . to keep and bear arms under the second amendment” as a basis for repealing parts of the 1968 Gun Control Act and imposing mandatory sentences for using a gun in committing certain crimes.\footnote{\textit{Id.} § 1(b) (codified at 18 U.S.C. § 921 note).} With this act of legislative constitutionalism, principles and policies that members of the New Right had worked out in the 1970s were now embodied in law.

But the developments that would do most to legitimate the new Second Amendment arguments unfolded in the Reagan Justice Department. After his resounding reelection, President Reagan elevated
Edwin Meese to Attorney General in 1985. Meese was determined to translate into law the conservative movement’s wide-ranging demands for constitutional restoration.\footnote{120 See infra p. 220. See generally Steven M. Teles, Transformative Bureaucracy: Reagan’s Lawyers and the Dynamics of Political Investment, Prepared for Studies in American Development (unpublished manuscript, on file with the Harvard Law School Library).} Ronald Reagan made a key part of his campaign for the presidency the promise to replace the judiciary with judges who, in the words of the Republican Party platform, “respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life.”\footnote{121 REPUBLICAN NAT’L CONVENTION, REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM OF 1980, available at http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25844; see Sheldon Goldman, Reagan’s Second Term Judicial Appointments: The Battle at Midway, 70 JUDICATURE 324, 324–25 (1987).} As Reagan took office, Weyrich worked from the Heritage Foundation and then the Free Congress Foundation — the conservative think tanks he had helped found with Coors and Scaife money — to press for change on “social issues” through the judiciary.\footnote{122 Weyrich founded the conservative Heritage Foundation and the Free Congress Foundation with funds from Joseph Coors and Richard Scaife. By 1988, Scaife had given the Free Congress Foundation \$7,014,000, making him the Foundations’ top lifetime donor. BELLANT, supra note 95, at 83. Under Weyrich’s leadership, both organizations focused on judicial reform. See John Chamberlain, Moral Issues Not a Good Core for Political Coalitions, IRONWOOD DAILY GLOBE, Dec. 1, 1981, at 4 (discussing polling by Weyrich’s Heritage Foundation in the spring of 1980 reporting that “two-thirds of the people would prefer to have state rather than federal judges decide such ‘social issues as abortion, busing and voluntary prayer in the schools’” and explaining that “the New Right’s Paul Weyrich has decided to lead off with a call for reform of our court system”). See generally A BLUEPRINT FOR JUDICIAL REFORM (Patrick B. Mcguigan & Randall R. Rader eds., 1981) (collecting papers of a conference sponsored by the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation).} This focus on the judiciary would be crucial: by the end of his second term, President Reagan would appoint close to half of the lower federal court judges, and three new Supreme Court Justices.\footnote{123 David M. O’Brien, Federal Judgships in Retrospect, in THE REAGAN PRESIDENCY 327, 327 (W. Elliot Brownlee & Hugh Davis Graham eds., 2003); see also Goldman, supra note 121, at 325.} Reagan’s impact on the judiciary resulted not only from the numbers of his appointments, but also from the distinctive constitutional understandings and commitments that the Administration brought to the federal bench.

At the time of Reagan’s election, conservative critiques of the Court had begun to shift from demands for “strict construction” — a theme of the Nixon years — to an emerging call for return to the Constitution’s “original intent” — a theme sounded by Robert Bork, Raoul Berger, and \textit{Benchmark}, a journal published by the Olin- and Scaife-funded Center for Judicial Studies.\footnote{124 For a history of originalism’s construction in the Reagan administration, see JOHNATHAN O’NEILL, ORIGINALISM IN AMERICAN LAW AND POLITICS 111–32, 162–70 (2005). The Center for Judicial Studies connected conservatives in the foundations, government, and the academy interested in developing constitutional theory for the New Right. \textit{See id.} at 137, 148 (observing...
express criticism of the Court in originalist terms in Reagan’s second term, with Meese’s appointment as Attorney General strengthening ties between the Justice Department and the various think tank organizations of the New Right, such as Weyrich’s Heritage Foundation and the Center for Judicial Studies. Soon after his appointment, Meese drew fire with a series of prominent addresses embracing original intent and challenging the Court’s claim in *Cooper v. Aaron* that its decisions were the supreme law of the land: “To confuse the Constitution with judicial pronouncements allows no standard by which to criticize and to seek the overruling of” the Court’s decisions and thus was “to submit to government by judiciary.” As Nixon had shown, calls for “strict construction” of the Constitution that condemned the busing and criminal defendants decisions of the Warren Court helped mobilize and unite Americans; Reagan demonstrated how filiopietistic appeal to the framers’ Constitution could legitimate the New Right’s demands for constitutional change. Meese’s speeches endorsing original intent and the departmental prerogative of the executive branch to challenge the Court’s interpretation of the Constitution now gave the movement’s constitutional politics jurisprudential form.

125 See Kamen & Kurtz, supra note 124 (reporting that conservative foundations “appear to have a particularly aggressive ally in Meese” and quoting the director of the “judicial-revision project” at the Free Congress Foundation describing the foundation’s relation to the Justice Department, “We’re part of the team . . . . We’re trying to influence the agenda. We provide some of the intellectual power.”).

126 O’NEILL, supra note 124, at 156.


128 Edwin Meese III, *Perspectives on the Authoritativeness of Supreme Court Decision: The Law of the Constitution*, 61 TUL. L. REV. 979, 989 (1987). In challenging the Court’s authority, Meese was invoking Lincoln’s challenge to *Dred Scott* and implicitly, Raoul Berger’s recent attack on the Warren and Burger Courts. See RAOUl BERGER, GOVERNMENT BY JUDICIARY 363 (1st ed. 1977) (criticizing proponents of a “living Constitution”); id. at 367 (criticizing all those who “endeavored to discredit ‘original intention,’ to rid us of the ‘dead hand of the past’”); id. at 370 (stating that “[i]f the Court may substitute its own meaning for that of the Framers it may . . . rewrite the Constitution without limit”).

129 See sources cited supra note 68.


131 See Post & Siegel, *Originalism As a Political Practice*, supra note 10, at 549 (“To understand originalism’s power at the dawn of the twenty-first century is to appreciate the subtle ways in
But how would those committed to originalism achieve restoration of their Constitution? The Center for Judicial Studies’s \textit{Benchmark} did more than urge a jurisprudence of original intent; it helped conservatives work out a New Right approach to constitutional change. Although proponents of original intent insisted that the Constitution could only be changed through Article V amendment, the director of the Center for Judicial Studies, James McClellan, penned editorials advising conservatives to “kick the habit” of relying on Article V to overturn Supreme Court decisions; the strategy had repeatedly failed in the 1960s and 1970s and tended instead to legitimate the Court. 

“[T]here is something fundamentally wrong with our system if we are driven to amend the Constitution so as to restore its original meaning,” McClellan advised, criticizing the Reagan Administration’s “Prayer Amendment” and pointing out that conservatives would better achieve their aims by selectively restricting the Court’s jurisdiction or filing amicus briefs in Supreme Court cases. Introducing an issue of \textit{Benchmark} in the fall of 1984 that surveyed some seven hundred decisions of the judges Reagan had appointed in his first term (a survey undertaken with the support of the Right-to-Work Foundation), McClellan was plainly impressed. McClellan predicted that the President’s careful selection of judges thus far points to the conclusion that he will succeed in protecting many of his political gains against judicial attack in the years ahead. Indeed, Reagan’s reform of the Federal Judiciary, done which originalism connects constitutional law to a living political culture and provides its proponents a compelling language in which to seek constitutional change through adjudication and politics.

\footnote{\textit{O’Neill}, supra note \ref{note124}, at 126 (“[Raoul] Berger . . . regularly defended . . . the reservation of basic constitutional change for the Article V amendment process.”); see also infra note \ref{note137} (discussing an article by Justice Antonin Scalia written in 1989).}

\footnote{James McClellan, \textit{Kicking the Amendment Habit}, \textit{Benchmark}, Jan.–Feb. 1984, at 1, 2 (“[W]e should resist efforts to add amendments to our fundamental law to correct misinterpretations rendered by the Supreme Court. At the very least, such amendments tend to wink at judicial supremacy, and color the Court’s usurpations with the tint of legitimacy.”); see also \textit{O’Neill}, supra note \ref{note124}, at 148, 257 n.52. The New Right’s assumption that constitutional change on the “social issues” agenda would come through legislative channels — statutes regulating the judiciary and Article V amendments — was visible in a conflict during the first year of Reagan’s presidency. See John Lofton Jr., \textit{Baker Urges Delay of Social Issues Legislative Agenda Until Next Year}, \textit{Conservative Dig.}, May 1981, at 2, 2–3 (reporting that the Senate would “delay until next year the so-called ‘social issues’ agenda — that is, legislation dealing with abortion, forced busing, voluntary school prayer, family protection, etc.” — to give priority to the President’s economic program, and characterizing the deferral as requiring postponement of “emotional issues and constitutional amendments”).

\footnote{McClellan, \textit{supra} note \ref{note133}, at 2.}

\footnote{\textit{Id.} at 2–3.}
without the benefit of legislation reducing the power of the courts, may prove to be the most enduring achievement of his presidency.\textsuperscript{136}

Thus, as conservatives took over the federal bench, they kicked their old Article V habits and began to employ new constitutional tools. Originalists might still catechistically insist that changing the Constitution required amending it,\textsuperscript{137} but as McClellan emphasized, “to restore [the Constitution’s] original meaning”\textsuperscript{138} did not.

In assuming the role of Attorney General in Reagan’s second term, Meese approached appointments as a way “to institutionalize the Reagan revolution so it can’t be set aside no matter what happens in future presidential elections.”\textsuperscript{139} Stephen Markman was named head of the Office of Legal Policy (OLP) to oversee this effort.\textsuperscript{140} As chief counsel for Orrin Hatch’s Subcommittee on the Constitution, Markman helped write The Right To Keep and Bear Arms and was then asked to found the D.C. chapter of the Federalist Society.\textsuperscript{141} Reporting on Reagan’s elevation of Federalist Society “favorite” Antonin Scalia to the Supreme Court in 1986, the New York Times quoted Markman as explaining that “[t]he Federalist Society provides a good opportunity for us to get to know people who share the constitutional conservative perspective of the Attorney General and the President.”\textsuperscript{142} By the end of his second term, Reagan had appointed nearly half of the nation’s judges in a highly orchestrated and careful screening process that paid close attention to the nominees’ substantive views.\textsuperscript{143} “‘Reagan had certain judicial values he wanted institutionalized on the bench,’ . . . Markman, now a judge on the Michigan Supreme Court,” recently emphasized.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{136} James McClellan, Advertisement to Our Readers, BENCHMARK, July–Oct. 1984, at ii.

\textsuperscript{137} As Justice Scalia analyzed the question in 1989, judges should interpret the Constitution to enforce fidelity to “original values”; it was abandoning original values that required a constitutional amendment. See Scalia, supra note 13, at 862.

\textsuperscript{138} McClellan, supra note 133, at 2 (emphasis added).

\textsuperscript{139} David M. O’Brien, Op-Ed., Meese’s Agenda for Ensuring the Reagan Legacy, L.A. TIMES, Sept. 28, 1986, at E3 (quoting Edwin Meese III, Attorney General) (internal quotation marks omitted); see also Teles, supra note 120.


\textsuperscript{142} Judge Scalia’s Cheerleaders, N.Y. TIMES, July 23, 1986, at B6 (quoting Stephen Markman, who represented the Justice Department at judicial selection meetings in the White House) (internal quotation marks omitted). In the same article, the Times also reported that the Federalist Society, founded in 1981, had $100,000 of its $400,000 budget in 1985 funded by the Scaife Foundation. Id.

\textsuperscript{143} See O’Brien, supra note 123, at 333–34 (describing the introduction of an “unprecedented screening process for potential judicial nominees” involving comparison of candidates’ records in a computerized database and day-long interviews in which candidates were asked questions “about their views on abortion, affirmative action, and criminal justice”).

In 1987, under Markman’s direction, the OLP prepared an *Original Meaning Jurisprudence* sourcebook, which reproduced foundational texts on original intent, including excerpts from Raoul Berger’s *Government By Judiciary*, and a speech by Antonin Scalia urging that claims about the original intent were better understood as claims about “original meaning” — claims based on the understandings of the Americans who ratified the document rather than those who drafted it. The following year, the OLP institutionalized these views about the proper method of interpreting the Constitution in the Department of Justice’s *Guidelines on Constitutional Litigation* and a lengthy document entitled *The Constitution in the Year 2000: Choices Ahead in Constitutional Interpretation*, which singled out the areas of substantive law that judicial appointments would affect. Like the sourcebook, the *Guidelines* and *The Constitution in the Year 2000* identified favored and disfavored lines of cases that tracked “social issues” of the New Right (for example, the rights of criminal defendants, school prayer, and contraception and abortion).

The OLP documents set out this New Right agenda for constitutional change as a project of restoring the original meaning of the Constitution. The OLP *Guidelines on Constitutional Litigation* explained how originalism justified changing constitutional law: “The inclusion of an original meaning section [in government briefs] will help to focus judges on the text of the Constitution and away from their personal

---

146 Id. at 101, 103–04, 139–50.
147 Office of Legal Policy, U.S. Dep’t of Justice, *Guidelines on Constitutional Litigation* 3 (1988) [hereinafter OLP, Guidelines] (“[C]onstitutional language should be construed as it was publicly understood at the time of its drafting and ratification and government attorneys should advance constitutional arguments based only on this ‘original meaning.’”).
149 See OLP, *Constitution in the Year 2000*, supra note 148; OLP, *Guidelines*, supra note 147, at 82 (identifying the “right of privacy cases, exemplified by *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965),” which held unconstitutional a Connecticut statute criminalizing the use of birth control, and *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973), which held that states could not prohibit abortion, as “examples of judicial creation of ‘fundamental’ rights not found in the Constitution”); id. at 86–87 (“Neither the search and seizure exclusionary rule nor the procedural rules for custodial interrogations established by *Miranda v. Arizona*, 384 U.S. 436 (1966),” rules that protect the rights of criminal defendants, have any “constitutional or statutory basis”); id. at 85–86 (arguing that “no establishment of religion was involved” in a Third Circuit case where a high school refused to allow students to use school facilities for prayer meetings); OLP, *Sourcebook*, supra note 145, at vi (listing the *Sourcebook’s* disfavored cases “illustrating non-interpretivist jurisprudence”).
preferences or from incorrectly reasoned court precedent as the appropriate basis for decisionmaking.”

The originalist narrative presents change as legitimate precisely because it is impersonal and not responsive to the “personal preferences” of the interpreter. Markman used the same language of self-denial in explaining how the judges the Administration had nominated would change constitutional law: “We’ve tried to appoint to the bench individuals who understand that their own policy preferences are not necessarily incorporated into the Constitution . . . .”

The executive branch’s project of constitutional restoration strengthened individual rights claims under the Second Amendment. President Reagan affirmed that the founders’ Constitution protected an individual right to bear arms: “Our team believes that law-abiding people who want to protect their home and family have a constitutional right to own guns.” Similarly, the Justice Department’s Guidelines on Constitutional Litigation, which sought changes in constitutional law that would embody the original understanding, affirmed that the “Constitution protects numerous individual liberties against government infringement,” including among the rights that “the Bill of Rights expressly protects against federal government action . . . the right to keep and bear arms (Second Amendment).”

Even more consequentially, numerous federal judges were appointed who shared the President’s constitutional vision. Claims about original understanding that the Reagan Justice Department helped forge offered a rule-of-law reason for the Administration and the judges Reagan appointed to abandon Warren and Burger Court precedents addressing “social issues” of the New Right and to propose new bodies of constitutional law in their stead. Changing the Constitution required amending it, but as James McClellan had

150 OLP, GUIDELINES, supra note 147, at 10.
151 Kathryn Kahler, Vision of a Reformed Judiciary Unlikely To Materialize, DAILY INTELLIGENCER/MONTGOMERY COUNTY REC., Jan. 20, 1988, at 11 (quoting Stephen Markman, assistant attorney general in the Office of Legal Policy) (internal quotation marks omitted).
152 Remarks at a Republican Campaign Rally in Mesquite, Texas, 2 PUB. PAPERS 1461, 1463 (Nov. 5, 1988); see also Remarks at the Annual Members Banquet of the National Rifle Association in Phoenix, Arizona, 1 PUB. PAPERS 659, 660 (May 6, 1983) (“[T]he Constitution does not say that government shall decree the right to keep and bear arms. The Constitution says ‘. . . the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.’”).
153 OLP, GUIDELINES, supra note 147, at 70.
154 See id. (describing careful “ideological screening” of Reagan’s judicial nominees). At the time Justice Scalia penned his decision in Heller, almost all significant opinions written by federal judges in the late twentieth century that recognize or remark favorably upon an individual right to bear arms appear to have been written by judges whom President Reagan appointed. See infra note 234.
emphasized, “to restore [the Constitution’s] original meaning” did not.156

Commentary on the Second Amendment in the nation’s law reviews changed with these movement and government activities. Discussion of the right to bear arms increased with the introduction of gun control proposals in Congress in the 1960s and 1970s, but spiked in the 1980s and after.157 Not only were there more articles, but they were differently researched and reasoned. They focused on founding-era history and appealed to the past, not simply as the repository of custom and wisdom,158 but of impersonally binding law.159

Yet even as the New Right coalition imbued libertarian claims on the Second Amendment with originalist authority, endowing the argument with evidence, rhetorical form, and public authority, the Second Amendment claim was never wholly integrated with the other “social issues” of the New Right coalition that Viguerie and Weyrich helped build, nor was it fully integrated into the originalist constitutional vision emerging from the Meese Justice Department. The impediments may have been personal and political.160 Or they may have stemmed from a deeper tension between the original understanding claims the

155 McClellan, supra note 133, at 2 (emphasis added).
156 For a volume that locates the Second Amendment in a survey of the “original meaning” and “current understanding of the Bill of Rights,” see THE BILL OF RIGHTS: ORIGINAL MEANING AND CURRENT UNDERSTANDING (Eugene W. Hickock, Jr., ed., 1991) (compiling papers from eight separate conferences conducted by the Center for Judicial Studies between 1985 and 1987).
158 See, e.g., Robert A. Sprecher, The Lost Amendment, 51 A.B.A. J. 554, 554 (1965) (arguing that because of “The wisdom of the Founding Fathers . . . , the framework of the original document has proved durable enough to encompass great flexibility through the device of judicial interpretation”); see also James A. McClure, Firearms and Federalism, 7 IDAHO L. REV. 197, 205 (1970) (“Since the genius of the nation’s founders has been the basis of our system of checks and balances and federal structure, scholars are continually attempting to interpret their words.”).
159 See, e.g., Bernard J. Bordenet, The Right To Possess Arms: The Intent of the Framers of the Second Amendment, 21 UWLA L. REV. 1, 30 (1990) (“The only proper and logical approach is to interpret the Constitution as its drafters and adopters intended. The Constitution contains provisions for amending it. Amendment through judicial fiat is both unconstitutional and illegal.” (footnote omitted)); Robert Dowlut, The Right to Arms: Does the Constitution or the Predilection of Judges Reign?, 36 OKLA. L. REV. 65, 75 (1983) (“The Americans desired a written constitution, for it was felt a constitution should contain ‘a fixed and definite body of principles.’” (quoting 1 R. CURRENT ET AL., AMERICAN HISTORY: A SURVEY 111 (3d ed. 1971))).
160 In the early 1980s, the NRA lobbyist Neal Knox got in a conflict with Reagan’s advisor Edwin Meese over plans to reorganize the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; Knox was thereafter dismissed, in what appears to have been an effort to smooth relations with the Administration. See sources cited infra note 188. For a gun rights critique of Reagan’s commitment to gun rights, see Keep and Bear Arms, What Do You Think of This Politician?: A Follow-up to the KABA Poll (June 14, 2003), http://www.keepandbeararms.com/NewsArchives/XcNewsPlus.asp?cmd=view&articleId=2955.
New Right was making about the Second Amendment and other parts of the Constitution. In *The Constitution in the Year 2000*, originalism advanced the “social issues” agenda of the New Right by delegitimizing rights recognized by the Warren and Burger Courts; originalism was a tool for criticizing *courts*, not for challenging legislatures. By contrast, the individual rights claim on the Second Amendment was a New Right right, at odds with judicial precedent and in tension with New Right complaints about judicial activism. Its recognition would require a federal bench prepared to advance original understanding as a reason for invalidating *legislative* action.

At the end of the 1980s, the bench and bar still did not see the Second Amendment as authorizing judicial intervention of that kind. In 1991, former Chief Justice Warren Burger appeared on the *MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour* to call individual rights claims under the Second Amendment “the subject of one of the greatest pieces of fraud, I repeat the word ‘fraud,’ on the American public by special interest groups that I have ever seen in my lifetime.”\(^{161}\) Former Solicitor General Erwin Griswold was equally sharp in chastising the “National Rifle Association and its friends in Congress”: “[T]o assert that the Constitution is a barrier to reasonable gun laws, in the face of the unanimous judgment of the federal courts to the contrary, exceeds the limits of principled advocacy.”\(^{162}\) These remarks disparaging the NRA’s Second Amendment claims reflected what then remained the widespread view in the profession, even among conservative critics of the Warren and Burger Courts. In 1989, Robert Bork asserted that the Second Amendment operates “to guarantee the right of states to form militia, not for individuals to bear arms,” and indicated his belief that all state gun control is “probably constitutional.”\(^{163}\) Even though the number of law review articles on the right to bear arms increased in the 1980s, at least nineteen of the twenty-seven articles written between 1970 and 1989 espousing the view that the Second Amendment protected an individual right to bear arms were “written by lawyers who had been directly employed by or represented the NRA or other


\(^{163}\) Claudia Luther, *Bork Says State Gun Laws Constitutional,* L.A. TIMES, Mar. 15, 1989, at B5; see also Miriam Bensimhorn, *Advocates: Point and Counterpoint, Laurence Tribe and Robert Bork Debate the Framers’ Spacious Terms*, LIFE, Fall 1991 (Special Issue), at 96, 98 (“[T]he National Rifle Association is always arguing that the Second Amendment determines the right to bear arms. But I think it really is people’s right to bear arms in a militia. The NRA thinks that it protects their right to have Teflon-coated bullets. But that’s not the original understanding.” (quoting Robert Bork)).
This was to change in the years after Sanford Levinson published his 1989 article, *The Embarrassing Second Amendment*, in the pages of the *Yale Law Journal*, followed by Akhil Amar’s articles *The Bill of Rights As a Constitution* and *The Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment*, also in the *Yale Law Journal*. Now prominent law professors were beginning to examine constitutional understandings of the right to bear arms as a republican strategy of the founders for resisting government tyranny and as part of the liberal individual rights guarantees that emerged from Reconstruction. Levinson emphasized to liberal colleagues in the academy then enamored of republicanism that republican understandings of the founders might blur the boundaries between the individualist and collectivist accounts of the Second Amendment. “[T]he implications of republicanism might push us in unexpected, even embarrassing, directions,” he observed; “just as ordinary citizens should participate actively in governmental decision-making through offering their own deliberative insights . . . , so should ordinary citizens participate in the process of law enforcement and defense of liberty rather than rely on professionalized peacekeepers, whether we call them standing armies or police.” In 1992, the NRA responded to the favorable publicity Levinson’s article generated by creating a new foundation called Academics for the Second Amendment (A2A), headed by a member of the NRA board of directors, and

---

164 Carl T. Bogus, *The History and Politics of Second Amendment Scholarship: A Primer, in The Second Amendment in Law and History 1, 4* (Carl T. Bogus ed., 2000). Sixteen were written or co-written by Stephen P. Halbrook, Robert Dowlut, Richard Gardiner, David Hardy, or David Caplan, all current or former lawyers for the NRA. Robert J. Spitzer, *Lost and Found: Researching the Second Amendment*, 76 CHI-KENT L. REV. 349, 379 n.157, app. at 387–92 (2000). Another was written by Alan Gottlieb, founder of the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms and the Second Amendment Foundation, *Guns in American Society*, supra note 80, at 527, and two more were written by Don Kates, a Second Amendment Foundation lawyer, see *Quilici v. Second Amendment Foundation*, 769 F.2d 414, 415 (7th Cir. 1985). Spitzer, supra, app. at 389–917.


168 For discussion of this phase of scholarship, see Bogus, supra note 164, at 1, 4–13.

169 See, e.g., Amar, supra note 166, at 1163 (“[T]he people’s right to alter or abolish tyrannous government invariably required a popular appeal to arms.”); Levinson, supra note 165, at 646–51; id. at 651 (“[T]he citizenry itself can be viewed as an important third component of republican governance insofar as it stands ready to defend republican liberty against the depredations of [the federal government and the states], however futile that might appear as a practical matter.”).

170 Amar, supra note 167, at 1262 (describing the transformation of the Second Amendment after Reconstruction to “an essentially ‘civil’ right”).

171 Levinson, supra note 165, at 650–51.
in 1994 it began awarding an annual “Stand Up for the Second Amendment” prize, with first place winning $25,000.  

D. Conflict and Compromise: Second Amendment Rights from Militias to Culture Wars

The decade in which new understandings of the Second Amendment would be taken up in the legal academy was marked by escalating political struggle over gun rights. It was an era of increasing public support for gun control, of violent countermobilization, and ultimately of unstable forms of political accommodation, affecting both the tenor of gun rights advocacy and boundaries of acceptable gun control regulation. At stake was the question of how political claims on the Second Amendment would be asserted: as an outgrowth of a republican tradition that understood the militia as defense against government tyranny, or as grounded in a more classically liberal tradition concerned with the individual’s right to defend himself and his family from crime.

The newest phase of struggle over gun rights unfolded in a period of escalating crime and civilian violence. Throughout the 1990s, sixty to eighty percent of the American public expressed support for the idea that “laws covering the sale of firearms should be made more strict.” Support for increasing gun regulation likely reflected changes in politics as well. After the drive for a national handgun ban foundered in the 1970s, advocates for gun control had organized in new ways, with groups forming at the local as well as national level and advocating incremental restrictions on gun ownership, as well as local bans of the kind Morton Grove had enacted.

With President Clinton’s election in 1992, a supporter of gun control was now in the White House, and Democrats controlled both

---

172 See Bogus, supra note 164, at 6–7. “The N.R.A. was so delighted by Levinson’s unexpected article that the group reprinted thousands of copies, which prompted a wave of fan mail for the professor.” Andrea Sachs, Why the Second Amendment Is a Loser in Court, TIME, May 29, 1995, at 22, 22; see also Letter from John Ashcroft, U.S. Att'y Gen., to James Jay Baker, Exec. Dir. of NRA (May 17, 2001), available at http://www.nraila.org/images/Ashcroft.pdf (citing Levinson, as well as Amar, van Alstyne, and Kates, to support an individual rights interpretation of the Second Amendment).

173 Between 1987 and 1994, the firearms homicide rate rose by forty percent and gun-related robberies by nearly thirty percent, GOSS, supra note 69, at 46, and the media intensively covered recurrent mass shootings, see id.


175 See GOSS, supra note 69, at 46.

176 Id. at 45–46.
houses of Congress. In 1993 Congress enacted the Brady Bill\(^\text{177}\) — named after the Reagan press secretary who had been critically injured in the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan. The Brady Bill was incremental rather than categorical in its reach. It created a background check mechanism to enforce the provisions of the 1968 Act that barred high-risk classes of persons (drug addicts, minors) from purchasing weapons.\(^\text{178}\) The following year, Congress enacted another incremental restriction on gun ownership, the 1994 assault weapons ban, which prohibited sale to civilians of certain semiautomatic “assault weapons.”\(^\text{179}\)

The passage of incremental gun control legislation early in Clinton’s administration worked to provoke and mobilize the NRA,\(^\text{180}\) first to oppose the legislation and then to press for its repeal — an aim the NRA pursued by joining forces with House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the Republican Party.\(^\text{181}\) The Republican victory in the 1994 election was credited in significant part to the NRA’s “massive effort . . . to punish Democrats who supported the Brady handgun law and the crime bill including a ban on assault weapons.”\(^\text{182}\) The NRA spent more than $3.2 million on GOP campaigns and helped win nineteen of twenty-four “priority” races the organization targeted, leading to a House with a majority of members who were “A-rated” by the NRA.\(^\text{183}\) Thereafter, Neal Knox assured the NRA membership that, as part of its new “Contract with America,” the leadership of the Republican Party had promised to attempt repeal of the assault weapons


\(^{178}\) Goss, supra note 69, at 177.


\(^{180}\) See Neal Knox, Mr. Newt’s “Second Amendment Strategy,” AM. RIFLEMAN, Mar. 1995, at 14, 14 (recounting promise of Republican leadership to attempt to repeal the assault weapons ban as part of the “Contract with America”).

\(^{181}\) Cf. DeConde, supra note 47, at 255 (noting that in August of 1994, “the Republican National Committee threatened to condemn and deny campaign funds to any party representatives who voted for the ban on assault weapons,” but that party members nonetheless broke ranks to enact the ban).

\(^{182}\) David S. Broder, A Historic Republican Triumph, WASH. POST, Nov. 9, 1994, at A1, A14; see also Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, Under the Gun, FORTUNE, Dec. 6, 1999, at 211, 214 (reporting that the NRA “played a major role in the surprising Republican takeover of the House of Representatives in 1994,” helping defeat “such powerful Democrats as Speaker Thomas Foley . . . and Congressman Jack Brooks . . . , chairman of the House Judiciary Committee[,] . . . because they supported the assault weapons ban,” and reporting President Clinton’s observation that “[t]he NRA is the reason the Republicans control the House”).

\(^{183}\) Michael Isikoff et al., Of Tobacco, Torts and Tusks, NEWSWEEK, Nov. 28, 1994, at 30, 30.
ban and adopt a “coherent Second Amendment strategy to define gun ownership as a constitutional right, not a duck-hunting right.”

Republicans had turned the 1994 election into a referendum on the competence of government, and Gingrich appealed to gun rights to express themes about government and the body politic that had been echoing since the Johnson era. In *To Renew America*, Gingrich identified gun control as an issue that distinguished liberals and conservatives: “The Second Amendment is a political right written into our Constitution for the purpose of protecting individual citizens from their own government... Generally, liberals neither understand nor believe in the constitutional right to bear arms.” He proudly asserted a conservative claim on the Second Amendment grounded in law and order challenges to the Great Society. “[W]e should be concerned not with legislating against weaponry but with legislating against crime,” Gingrich observed, illustrating this claim by invoking in rapid succession the racially charged examples of O.J. Simpson, Willy Horton, and a serial rapist: “For some psychological reason, liberals are antigun but not anti-violent criminal.”

Hostility to government was even more pronounced within the NRA itself, and it was assuming new forms. In 1991, Neal Knox, who participated in the 1977 NRA takeover with Harlon Carter and was expelled in 1982 for lobbying tactics that may have alienated Edwin Meese, staged a return to power in a campaign pledging opposition to all forms of gun control. With Knox’s return, Tanya K. Metaksa became Executive Director of the ILA and the NRA moved right. Metaksa underscored the NRA’s position of “no compromise” on gun control and drew attention to its demand for repeal of the assault weapons ban by spelling her name for reporters: “It’s ‘ak’ as in AK-47 and ‘sa’ as in semi-automatic.”

---


186 *NEWT GINGRICH, TO RENEW AMERICA* 202 (1995).

187 Id. at 203.

188 See Paul Taylor, *Chief NRA Lobbyist’s Ouster Seen, Triggered by Opposition to Meese*, WASH. POST, April 17, 1982, at A4 (recounting Neal Knox’s opposition to Meese’s plan to transfer responsibilities of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms to the Secret Service); see also David Brock, *Wayne’s World*, AM. SPECTATOR, May 1997, at 36, 39 (reporting that “Ed Meese told Harlon [Carter], ‘Don’t ever send me this man Knox to see me again.’” (quoting Warren Cassidy, ILA director) (internal quotation marks omitted)).

189 Butterfield, *supra* note 184, at A12.

190 See id.

Under Knox and Metaksa’s leadership, the NRA was openly entangled with militias. A 1994 resolution declared: “Although the NRA has not been involved in the formation of any citizen militia units, neither has the NRA discouraged, nor would NRA contemplate discouraging, exercise of any constitutional right.”\textsuperscript{192} A militia movement of growing numbers understood itself in constitutional terms, arguing that “the federal government had no authority at the state and local level.”\textsuperscript{193} Bloody confrontations with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, first at Ruby Ridge (1992) and then at Waco (1993), had escalated the militia movement’s profound mistrust of the federal government: “Gun Control is for only one thing[:] . . . people control.”\textsuperscript{194}

The militias believed themselves to be exercising their Second Amendment right to bear arms for the core purpose for which the Second Amendment was intended: resisting tyranny.\textsuperscript{195} Calling themselves “Christian Patriots, Constitutionalists, Freemen and sovereigns,”\textsuperscript{196} and explaining their bonds and mission in openly racial terms, the militias grew their own, violent forms of dissenting community,\textsuperscript{197} which they explained as based in the Constitution and the Bible.\textsuperscript{198} The militias’ Second Amendment was related to the libertarian and populist Second Amendment Reagan had invoked, but more completely estranged from government — and, often, more blunt in its racial views.\textsuperscript{199}

The militia movement’s estrangement from government was enacted in graphic terms when Timothy McVeigh organized the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995. McVeigh, a member of the NRA, earned a living as an unlicensed dealer in paramilitary

\textsuperscript{192} Sennott, supra note 191, at 15 (quoting NRA’s Civilian Militia Statement of Nov. 10, 1994) (internal quotation marks omitted).
\textsuperscript{193} DeConde, supra note 47, at 257.
\textsuperscript{194} Id. at 258–59.
\textsuperscript{197} See Morris Dees with James Corcoran, Gathering Storm: America’s Militia Threat (1996); Swenson, supra note 196, at 130–51.
\textsuperscript{198} See Williams, supra note 195, at 217–18.
\textsuperscript{199} See Richard Feldman, Ricochet: Confessions of a Gun Lobbyist 234–35 (2008) (“Among the more disturbing aspects of the militia movement were the anti-Semitic and white supremacist nature of several groups. . . . The BATF’s gun-grabbing, black-clad storm troopers were seen as the foot soldiers of the [Zionist Occupation Government].”); Walter Goodman, Militia Family Life, Before It Goes Undercover, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 3, 1997, at C16 (quoting members of the Rocky Mountain Militia saying “We should celebrate the day [Martin Luther King, Jr.] got shot” and “[h]ave a white Christmas and a Jew-free New Year”).
gear at gun shows where he sold copies of *The Turner Diaries*, a key text of the militia movement that tells the tale of an ex-soldier on a “mission to blow up a federal building in the first overt act against a government ‘overrun by blacks and Jews.’”

McVeigh “believed the federal government intended to disarm the American public gradually and take away the right to bear arms under the Second Amendment,” pointing to events at Ruby Ridge as proof.

The Oklahoma bombing, which killed 168 people, was staged on the anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and Concord and the end of the Waco siege, and appears to have been modeled on the FBI bombing recounted in *The Turner Diaries*.

The question for the NRA after Oklahoma City was how rapidly it would distance itself from the militias, and from its leadership’s frequent characterization of federal agents as “jack-booted thugs.” It did not act quickly, prompting the resignation of former President George H.W. Bush. Thereafter, Wayne LaPierre unrepentantly asserted that the organization’s description of “jack-booted thugs” applied only to Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms agents, not to others in law enforcement.

In this same unrepentant spirit, the NRA named as its “Law Enforcement Officer of the Year” Richard Mack, who gained notoriety for openly endorsing the militia movement.

People get all upset when they hear about militias, but what’s wrong with it?” Mack asked in an interview. “Paul Revere called out the militia. It’s part of our history. I wouldn’t hesitate for a minute to call out my

---


201 LOU MICHEL & DAN HERBECK, *AMERICAN TERRORIST: TIMOTHY McVEIGH & THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING* 108 (2001) (account of bombing based on interviews with McVeigh during the period of his incarceration); see also id. at 39 (recounting influence on McVeigh of *The Turner Diaries*).

202 Id. at 226–28 (recounting that McVeigh chose April 19 as the date of the Oklahoma City bombing because it was the 220th anniversary of the Battle of Lexington and Concord that began the American Revolution and because it was the second anniversary of the end of the Waco siege, and that McVeigh prepared for his capture by taking with him to the bombing a collection of documents including a pamphlet on the militia movements of 1775, a copy of the Declaration of Independence, and a quote from the protagonist of *The Turner Diaries*).


posse against the federal government if it gets out of hand.\footnote{Sennott, supra note 191 (quoting Richard Mack) (internal quotation marks omitted). Mack later distanced himself from the militias, “den[yng] . . . reports in the Los Angeles Times and The Boston Globe that he . . . raised an armed citizen posse in Arizona to help enforce the law. He . . . publicly acknowledged that he organized a posse, but [claimed] that the only enforcement duties it ever took on were directing traffic.” Dan Harrie, Libertarian Throws His Hat into Utah’s Governor Race, SALT LAKE TRIB., Nov. 7, 2003, at B3.}

(The NRA selected Mack as plaintiff in its challenge to the Brady Bill, whose registration provisions the Supreme Court would declare unconstitutional in Printz v. United States\footnote{521 U.S. 898 (1997).} in a decision written by Justice Scalia, holding that the temporary federal registration provisions of the act “commandeer[ed]” local law enforcement officials, contrary to the original understanding of the federalist scheme.\footnote{Id. at 914.})

The NRA’s failure to distance itself from the militias in the wake of Oklahoma City had palpable consequences. By 1996, the organization’s membership had declined by twelve percent, and its contributions to political action committees had dropped by more than a fifth.\footnote{Ian Brodie, Foot Soldiers Desert the Gun Lobby, TIMES (London), Apr. 1, 1996.} Thereafter Wayne LaPierre, in an effort to save the NRA’s standing in government and among voters, recruited Charlton Heston to help oust Knox and transform the organization’s social profile.\footnote{RAYMOND, supra note 57, at 262–63. For Knox’s account of the takeover, see Neal Knox, The Mutiny at NRA, URBAN ARMORY, Jan. 1, 1999, http://www.urban-armory.com/nealknox01099.htm.}

In pursuit of the NRA’s presidency, Heston appeared on radio programs where he distanced himself from the “extremist element” in the NRA, said the Brady Act wasn’t worth the energy to repeal (because local police ignored it, “I don’t care if they keep the Brady Act forever”),\footnote{RAYMOND, supra note 57, at 265 (internal quotation marks omitted).} and announced repeatedly that “AK-47’s are entirely inappropriate for private use.”\footnote{James N. Thurman, NRA’s New Aim: To Soften Its Edges and Re-enlist Moderates, CHRISTIAN SCI. MONITOR, June 10, 1998, at 5. For Neal Knox’s account of the positions Heston was taking in the media in the period he was seeking control of the NRA, see Knox, supra note 210 (discussing Heston’s statements in his various TV and radio appearances). See also Robert W. Lee, Heston, for the Record, NEW AM., Apr. 13, 1998, at 15 (reporting Heston’s comments in radio interview about accepting the Brady Act and his intention “to get ‘the right-wing folks off the [NRA] board and out of the picture’”).}

With Heston’s takeover, the NRA began visibly to cultivate a new, more family-friendly public image. Advertisements promised that the NRA’s new magazine, American Guardian, would feature “home & self-defense,” “family recreational shooting,” “women’s issues,” “handgun carry options,” and “high-tech home security: locks, lights, alarms & more.”\footnote{The National Rifle Association Introduces American Guardian, AM. RIFLEMAN, Aug. 1997, at 11.} Heston gave the law-and-
order Second Amendment a constitutional pedigree, emphasizing that the Second Amendment guaranteed Americans the ability to defend themselves against threats to liberty “whether it be King George’s Redcoats or today’s criminal predators,” and spoke of gun ownership as a family “tradition” that parents had a duty to teach their children.\footnote{214} In this period, some prominently positioned interpreters of the Second Amendment emphasized the forms of gun control the Constitution allowed, while others excluded from the amendment’s protection paramilitary activity.\footnote{215}

But even as Charlton Heston ceded ground on some issues, distancing the NRA from the militias and from its call for repeal of the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban, he went on the political offensive, asserting Second Amendment rights in a populist register that recalled the claim’s roots in the New Right’s challenge to the Great Society and the Warren Court. Invoking the republican claim that the “purpose of the Bill of Rights was to protect the people from the state,” Heston told the NRA in 1996:

> Our founders refused to ratify a constitution that didn’t protect individual liberties. Maybe they’re just a bunch of wise, old, dead, white guys, but they meant what they said. The Second Amendment isn’t about the National Guard or the police or any other government entity. It is about law-abiding, private U.S. citizens, period. You are of that same bloodline. You are sons and daughters of the Boston tea-spillers.\footnote{216}

Heston’s filiopiety was unmistakably racialized. “And no amount of oppression, no FBI, no IRS, no big government, no social engineers, no
matter what and no matter how, they cannot cleave the genes we share with our Founding Fathers.”

The following year, after assuming the Vice-Presidency of the NRA, Heston delivered a speech at Weyrich’s Free Congress Foundation, where he announced, “I have come to realize that a cultural war is raging across our land . . . storming our values, assaulting our freedoms, killing our self-confidence in who we are and what we believe, where we come from.” Heston identified gun owners who lacked confidence to reveal themselves as “victim[s] of the cultural war,” and equated the position of gun owners with “Pentecostal Christians, or pro-life workers, or right-to-workers, or Promise Keepers, or school voucherers.”

Heston exhorted his audience at the Free Congress Foundation to make common cause with gun owners:

I am not really here to talk about the Second Amendment or the NRA, but the gun issue clearly brings into focus the war that’s going on.

Rank-and-file Americans wake up every morning, increasingly bewildered and confused at why their views make them lesser citizens. . . . Heaven help the God-fearing, law-abiding, Caucasian, middle class, Protestant, or — even worse — Evangelical Christian, Midwest, or Southern, or — even worse — rural, apparently straight, or — even worse — admittedly heterosexual, gun-owning or — even worse — NRA-card-carrying, average working stiff, or — even worse — male working stiff, because not only don’t you count, you’re a downright obstacle to social progress. . . . That’s why you don’t raise your hand. That’s how cultural war works.

Again, Heston specifically appealed to white racial consciousness: “The Constitution was handed down to guide us by a bunch of those wise old dead white guys who invented this country.” Observing that “some flinch when I say that,” he asked “[w]hy?” insisting:

It’s true . . . they were white guys. So were most of the guys who died in Lincoln’s name opposing slavery in the 1860s. So why should I be ashamed of white guys? Why is “Hispanic pride” or “black pride” a good thing, while “white pride” conjures up shaved heads and white hoods? . . . I’ll tell you why: Cultural warfare.

In fighting the culture war, Heston defended traditional ways against equality claims of all kinds:

Mainstream America is depending on you . . . to draw your sword and fight for them[,] . . . to battle . . . the fringe propaganda of the homosexual

---

217 HESTON, supra note 216, at 168.
219 Id.
220 Id.
221 Id. (first alteration in original).
coalition, the feminists who preach that it’s a divine duty for women to hate men, blacks who raise a militant fist with one hand while they seek preference with the other . . . .

He closed with an appeal for constitutional restoration: “It’s the same blueprint our founding fathers left to guide us. Our enemies see it as the senile prattle of an archaic society. I still honor it as the United States Constitution . . . .”

In embracing the rubric of the culture war — a theme Patrick Buchanan made notorious in a speech endorsing George Bush’s nomination at the 1992 Republican National Convention — Heston transmuted the NRA’s affair with the militias into a different and more politically acceptable form, expressing a creed that he repeated at every opportunity. He consolidated these themes in a speech, "Winning the Cultural War," delivered at Harvard Law School in 1999, which circulated widely on the internet once it was read on air by Rush Limbaugh. Warning his audience that he believed “we are again engaged in a great civil war, a cultural war that’s about to hijack your birthright,” Heston urged:

222 Id.
223 Id.
224 Although “culture war” terminology has been in use since the German Kulturkampf in the 1870s, it reemerged as a way of talking about contemporary American society in 1987 with the publication of Cultural Conservatism: Toward a New National Agenda, a survey commissioned by Paul Weyrich that advocated that conservatives take up a culture war, arguing that conservatives would be much more successful if they mobilized around social rather than economic issues. FREE CONGRESS RESEARCH & EDUC. FOUND., CULTURAL CONSERVATISM: TOWARD A NEW NATIONAL AGENDA 8–9 (1987); see also JAMES DAVISON HUNTER, CULTURE WARS: THE STRUGGLE TO DEFINE AMERICA 173 (1991) (stating that five areas in which culture war rages most intensely are the family, education, the popular media, law, and electoral politics). The culture war hit the mainstream with Patrick Buchanan’s speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention, when he declared the ’92 election a “cultural war . . . for the soul of America,” in which “Clinton and Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side.” Patrick J. Buchanan, Speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention (Aug. 17, 1992), available at http://www.buchanan.org/pa-92-0817-rnc.html. Buchanan’s war was a moral one — to save “God’s country” from “radical feminism,” from “abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat.” Id. Despite Paul Weyrich’s declaration in 1999 that religious conservatives had lost the culture war, see Dale McConkey, Whither Hunter’s Culture War? Shifts in Evangelical Morality, 1988–1998, 62 SOC. RELIGION 149, 149 (2001), the 2004 election saw its resurgence, with “the left and the right mobilizing furiously around those hot-button social issues,” Robin Toner, Below the Campaign Radar, a Values War, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 17, 2004, at A10; see also Robin Toner, The Nation: To the Barricades, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 29, 2004, at W1.

225 See, for example, the speeches collected in the appendix of HESTON, supra note 216. See also NRA: “Armed with Pride,” AM. RIFLEMAN, Mar. 1998, at 30, 31, 33 (interview with Charlton Heston and Wayne LaPierre) (Heston, speaking of a “cultural war,” urges NRA members to “feel proud again” and warns them “[d]on’t run for cover when the cultural cannons roar. Remember who you are and what you believe, and . . . stand up and speak out.”).

As I have stood in the crosshairs of those who target Second Amendment freedoms, I’ve realized that firearms are not the only issue. No, it’s much, much bigger than that.

I’ve come to understand that a cultural war is raging across our land, in which, with Orwellian fervor, certain acceptable thoughts and speech are mandated.\textsuperscript{227}

Heston responded to the storm of criticism his earlier remarks had generated, objecting to being called a “racist” or a “homophobe” for asserting his constitutional rights:

For example, I marched for civil rights with Dr. King in 1963 — long before Hollywood found it fashionable. But when I told an audience last year that white pride is just as valid as black pride or red pride or anyone else’s pride, they called me a racist.

I’ve worked with brilliantly talented homosexuals all my life. But when I told an audience that gay rights should extend no further than your rights or my rights, I was called a homophobe.\textsuperscript{228}

Denouncing these complaints as if he resented the imputation, Heston instead defiantly asserted his constitutional identity: “But I am not afraid. If Americans believed in political correctness, we’d still be King George’s boys — subjects bound to the British crown.”\textsuperscript{229}

Heston’s cry for constitutional restoration touched themes that extended to the very roots of the mobilization for gun rights in the late twentieth century — a movement that grew up in the shadow of civil rights struggle. \textit{This} Second Amendment accepted Brown: it renounced claims of race privilege voiced by Southern conservatives in the initial years of white resistance, and was versed in forms of racial group assertion that could withstand charges of racism.\textsuperscript{230} Yet, this Second Amendment unmistakably carried the memory of civil rights


\textsuperscript{228} Id.

\textsuperscript{229} Id.

\textsuperscript{230} Although not every advocate invoking culture war references guns, gun advocates often invoke the culture war — in terms that, like Heston’s, directly or indirectly raise racial concerns. See Wayne LaPierre, Executive Vice President, Nat’l Rifle Assoc., Speech Before the NRA Annual Meeting in Charlotte, N.C. (May 20, 2000), available at http://www.nra.org/Speech.aspx?id=6032 (“And the dirty little secret is [criminals are] overwhelmingly black and hispanic. But everybody’s so scared of being called a racist they won’t admit the level of killing among non-white teenaged gangbangers.”); see also Paul Blackman, The Federal Factoid Factory on Firearms and Violence: A Review of CDC Research and Politics, 7 J. ON FIREARMS & PUB. POL’Y 21, 30 (1995) (arguing that violence “is epidemic only among young blacks and Hispanics”). Blackman, a research coordinator for the Institute for Legislative Action of the NRA, later argues that “studies of homicide victims,” who he has earlier identified as largely people of color, “suggest they are frequently criminals themselves and/or drug abusers. It is quite possible that their deaths, in terms of economic consequences to society, are net gains.” Id. at 51–52; see also infra note 231 (lecture by assistant counsel of the NRA on guns and culture).
struggle, and with it a deep sense of social division; it imagined society as divided into kinds, the “law-abiding citizen” and the “criminal,” the deserving and the undeserving — and resented government when it identified with the undeserving other. This law-and-order Second Amendment recalled the founding as the time before the constitutional (un)settlements of the late twentieth century.231

III. HELLER, ORIGINALISM, AND THE CULTURE WARS

You see, I have my rules that confine me. I know what I’m looking for. When I find it — the original meaning of the Constitution — I am handcuffed. . . . Though I’m a law-and-order type, I cannot do all the mean conservative things I would like to do to this society. You got me.


The boundary between law and politics is forged in constitutional culture.233 Heller, and most federal opinions that recognized or re-

231 Addressing the Conservative Political Action Conference in 1997, Heston invoked “‘50s-vintage movies, news clippings, . . . TV shows like Beaver and Lucy and Father Knows Best . . . portraying traditional family units, cops who’re on your side, clergy who aren’t kooky, safe schools, certain punishment, manageable conflict,” and urged: America yearns to be true to itself again, to return to that warm fireside of common sense and common values. Remember how we once felt about our safety, our schools, our police, our employers, our media, our parents, our neighbors? Remember when we trusted the federal government to do the right thing? Today only one in four of us does.

. . . . Americans want to be American again.

Charlton Heston, Be Yourselves, O Americans, Remarks Before the Conservative Political Action Conference (Jan. 25, 1997), in HESTON, supra note 216, 170, 172; see also James H. Warner, Assistant Gen. Counsel, Nat’l Rifle Assoc., Heritage Lecture: Guns, Crime, and the Culture War 6–7 (July 2, 1992), available at http://www.heritage.org/Research/Crime/upload/92266_1.pdf (“Guns do not get young girls pregnant. Guns do not create drug addiction. Guns did not create a welfare system which traps young women in dependency and keeps them in its thrall. Guns do not create music which glorifies hatred. Guns do not teach young children that they are not part of America, and that they have no share in its culture. Guns do not cause people to urinate in the halls nor to defecate in the stairwells of public housing projects. . . . But each of these conditions can be traced back to the enemies of our culture . . . . There is no reason why the streets of Washington, D.C., could not be as safe as the streets of Lyndonville, Vermont, or Bismarck, North Dakota. But this will not happen until all Americans are assimilated into one country with one, common culture.”).


233 See Siegel, Constitutional Culture, supra note 10, at 1327 (employing “the framework of constitutional culture to analyze the ways mobilized citizens influence officials who enforce the Constitution” and showing “how constitutional culture supplies the understandings of role and the practices of argument through which citizens and officials can propose new ways of enacting the society’s defining commitments. . . . Constitutional culture preserves and perpetually destabilizes the distinction between politics and law.”).
marked favorably upon an individual right to bear arms in the decades preceding it, were written by judges whom President Reagan appointed. 234 Originalism helps transmute their constitutional politics into constitutional law. Even as Justice Scalia changes constitutional law in ways that vindicate the values of the New Right, he presents himself as self-denying, “confine[d]” by “rules,” “handcuffed.” 235 Only the judge who enforces the original understanding is constrained by law, Justice Scalia claims. 236

In dissent, where Justice Scalia speaks out most forcefully, 237 he regularly depicts his own views as fidelity to law, while denouncing his liberal colleagues for injecting their values into judging. In 1996, when the Court held that the Constitution prohibited government from expressing animus to gays, Justice Scalia famously objected, “I think it no business of the courts (as opposed to the political branches) to take sides in this culture war,” 238 in a dissent that expressed views about gays remarkably like those Charlton Heston would express in his culture war speeches for the NRA. Justice Scalia’s dissents in cases concerning “social issues” (as Paul Weyrich called them) 239 or

234 See Heller, 128 S. Ct. 2783 (Scalia, J.); Parker v. District of Columbia, 478 F.3d 370 (D.C. Cir. 2007) (Silberman, J.) (holding D.C.’s handgun ban unconstitutional under the Second Amendment); United States v. Emerson, 270 F.3d 203, 232 (5th Cir. 2001) (Garwood, J.) (“The plain meaning of the right of the people to keep arms is that it is an individual, rather than a collective, right and is not limited to keeping arms while engaged in active military service or as a member of a select militia such as the National Guard.”); see also Printz v. United States, 521 U.S. 898 (1997) (Scalia, J.) (upholding NRA claims that background-check provisions temporarily imposed by the Brady Bill amounted to federal commandeering of local law enforcement, contrary to the original understanding); Silveira v. Lockyer, 328 F.3d 567, 569–70 (9th Cir. 2003) (Kozinski, J., dissenting from denial of rehearing en banc); Koog v. United States, 79 F.3d 452 (5th Cir. 1996) (Jolly, J.) (holding unconstitutional the provision of the Brady Bill held unconstitutional in Printz); United States v. Lopez, 2 F.3d 1341, 1345, 1304 n.46 (5th Cir. 1993) (Garwood, J.) (characterizing in dicta the Second Amendment as “something of a brooding omnipresence” and noting that “some applications” of the statute at issue “might raise Second Amendment concerns.”); Printz v. United States, 854 F. Supp. 1503 (D. Mont. 1994) (Lovell, J.). A prominent exception is Justice Thomas, appointed by President George H.W. Bush. See Printz, 521 U.S. at 938 n.2 (Thomas, J., concurring) (“Marshaling an impressive array of historical evidence, a growing body of scholarly commentary indicates that the ‘right to keep and bear arms’ is, as the Amendment’s text suggests, a personal right.”)

235 See Scalia, supra note 232.

236 See id. (“You either tell your judges, ‘Look, this is a law, like all laws, give it the meaning it had when it was adopted.’ Or, you tell your judges, ‘Govern us.’”).

237 Cf. Jonathan Riehl, The Federalist Society and Movement Conservatism: How a Fractious Coalition on the Right Is Changing Constitutional Law and the Way We Talk and Think About It 254 (2007) (unpublished thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) (interviewing Justice Scalia) (“I still consider myself a teacher. That’s the main reason I write my dissents,’ [Justice Scalia] said. ‘I think the main point of the dissent is perhaps to try to change the future, and that will occur not by persuading my colleagues, who have made their mind up, but by persuading the next generation.’”).

238 Romer v. Evans, 517 U.S. 620, 652 (1996) (Scalia, J., dissenting); id. at 636 (“The Court has mistaken a Kulturkampf for a fit of spite.”).
“cultural war” issues (as Pat Buchanan and Charlton Heston called them)240 often voice resentments of the New Right as fidelity to law.241 When the Court invalidated a law criminalizing same-sex relations in Lawrence v. Texas, Justice Scalia complained that “the Court has taken sides in the culture war, departing from its role of assuring, as neutral observer, that the democratic rules of engagement are observed,” and objected that “[w]hat Texas has chosen to do is well within the range of traditional democratic action, and its hand should not be stayed through the invention of a brand-new ‘constitutional right’ by a Court that is impatient of democratic change.”242

It might seem inconsistent for Justice Scalia to denounce his colleagues for “take[ing] sides in the culture war,” yet vote in Heller to strike down a law that was viewed by legally literate lawyers in the twentieth century, until the rise of the gun rights movement, as “well within the range of traditional democratic action.”243 But Heller recognizes a New-Right right. Heller vindicates what Justice Scalia calls “original values” and so, in his view, requires no Article V amendment to change the law.244 When Justice Scalia sides with a social movement, he does not present himself — and may well not understand himself — as taking sides in the culture wars. Like Heston, Justice Scalia views the gun rights movement as rescuing the founders’ Constitution from the politics of the culture wars. Like Heston, Justice Scalia recognizes, as part of the founders’ Constitution, a Second Amendment that “elevates above all other interests the right of law-abiding, responsible citizens to use arms in defense of hearth and home.”245

240 See supra note 224 and accompanying text (discussing Buchanan’s cultural war speech).
241 Shortly after joining the Court, Justice Scalia denounced its decision upholding affirmative action in the promotion of a road dispatcher, lamenting that:
[T]he only losers in the process are the Johnsons of the country, for whom Title VII has been not merely repealed but actually inverted. The irony is that these individuals — predominantly unknown, unaffluent, unorganized — suffer this injustice at the hands of a Court fond of thinking itself the champion of the politically impotent.

243 See also Printz v. United States, 521 U.S. 898 (1997) (upholding NRA claims that background-check provisions temporarily imposed by Brady Bill amounted to federal commandeering of local law enforcement, contrary to the original understanding).
244 See supra note 137.
245 Heller, 128 S. Ct. at 2821.
This could reflect some coincidental alignment of the original understanding and the values around which the New Right has mobilized. Or, this coincidence could teach us something about the social processes that shape interpretation of particular claims about the founding and imbue constitutional rulings with popular authority.

Consider *Heller*. The correspondence between the law-and-order Second Amendment forged in culture wars of the New Right and the original public meaning of the Second Amendment that *Heller* vindicates is striking. When Justice Scalia explains that the Second Amendment protects rights of the “law-abiding, responsible citizens to use arms in defense of hearth and home,” he echoes Harlon Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Charlton Heston, who all claim the Second Amendment protects rights of the “law-abiding” and invoke the distinction between citizens and criminals to explain the Second Amendment.246 The coincidence is deeper, manifest not only in the rhetoric of the *Heller* opinion, but also in its account of the Second Amendment’s core purposes. Justice Scalia’s Second Amendment protects the law-abiding citizen’s ability to defend himself and his family from criminals — and not the republican vision of a militia prepared to defend against government tyranny.

Twentieth-century conflict helped tutor intuitions about the Second Amendment’s core and periphery. For most of the twentieth century, literate lawyers read the Second Amendment in light of the republican purposes enunciated in its first clause; but decades of gun rights mobilization transformed the “natural” meaning of the Constitution’s text so that, for increasing numbers of Americans, a law-and-order Second Amendment simply appeared there as the founders’ Constitution: “The Second Amendment is clear, or ought to be,” Governor Reagan urged in 1975. “It appears to leave little, if any, leeway for the gun control advocate.”247 In the ensuing decades, Congress gathered evidence to support the New Right’s reading of the amendment,248 the Reagan Justice Department appointed judges sympathetic to an originalist and law-and-order understanding of the Constitution,249 academics of note began to recognize the Second Amendment as a site of individual rights, while others affiliated with the gun rights movement began to develop a lawyerly case for recognizing judicially enforceable rights there. Nelson Lund, for example, helped shift the focus of Second Amendment interpretation by characterizing its first clause as “prefatory” and its second clause as “operative” — and received a Second

246 See supra pp. 208–09 (quoting Harlon Carter in 1970s); supra p. 210 (quoting Ronald Reagan in 1975); supra p. 252 (quoting Charlton Heston in 1990s); see also supra p. 233 (same).

247 Reagan, supra note 81.

248 See supra note 116 and accompanying text.

249 See supra section II.C.
Amendment chair funded by the NRA for his work.\textsuperscript{250} Decades of mobilization inside and outside the academy forged modes of interpreting the Second Amendment that make libertarian, law-and-order concerns central to its meaning and republican concerns peripheral. These movement-tutored presumptions make plausible Justice Scalia’s claim that the antecedents of the common-law right of self-defense are in the English Bill of Rights — even though the English Bill of Rights was motivated by the abuse of political power (the selective disarmament of Protestants by a Stuart monarch), not crime, and designed to vindicate parliamentary supremacy, not the rights of an individual against the legislature.\textsuperscript{251}

The mobilization of living Americans around the text and history of the Second Amendment did more than tutor popular and professional intuitions about the amendment’s core and peripheral purposes; it imbued the amendment with compelling contemporary social meaning by connecting the right to bear arms to some of the most divisive questions of late twentieth-century constitutional politics. These de-

\textsuperscript{250} A Hein Online search for the terms “operative,” “prefatory,” and “second amendment” suggests that Nelson Lund was the first academic to introduce this terminology into the Second Amendment literature. See Nelson Lund, The Past and Future of the Individual’s Right to Arms, 31 GA. L. REV. 1 (1996). Nelson Lund is the Patrick Henry Professor of Constitutional Law and the Second Amendment at the George Mason University School of Law. This position was created thanks to a one million dollar commitment to GMU School of Law by the National Rifle Association Foundation announced in 2003. Press Release, $1 Million Endows Professorship at George Mason University (Jan. 28, 2003), available at http://eagle.gmu.edu/newsroom/display.php?rid=399&keywords=. Justice Scalia relies on the distinction between “prefatory” and “operative” in describing the relationship of the amendment’s first and second clause. See, e.g., \textit{Heller}, 128 S. Ct. at 2789 (“The Second Amendment is naturally divided into two parts: its prefatory clause and its operative clause.”).

\textsuperscript{251} See \textit{Heller}, 128 S. Ct. at 2798 (observing of the English Bill of Rights provision guarding against disarmament of Protestants, “[t]his right has long been understood to be the predecessor to our Second Amendment. It was clearly an individual right, having nothing whatever to do with service in a militia.”) (citations omitted). But see id. at 2837–38 & n.30 (Stevens, J., dissenting) (objecting to majority’s claim that the provision of the English Bill of Rights guaranteeing arms for Protestants is appropriately understood as a predecessor to the Second Amendment).

For historical accounts of the Second Amendment that emphasize its republican pedigree, see AKHIL REED AMAR, AMERICA’S CONSTITUTION: A BIOGRAPHY 324 (2005) (observing that “Founding history confirms a republican reading of the Second Amendment, whose framers generally envisioned Minutemen bearing guns, not Daniel Boone gunning bears,” and noting that a military usage of arms similarly appears in state constitutions and the English Bill of Rights of 1689); SAUL CORNELL, A WELL-REGULATED MILITIA: THE FOUNDING FATHERS AND THE ORIGINS OF GUN CONTROL IN AMERICA (2006); and Jack N. Rakove, The Second Amendment: The Highest Stage of Originalism, 76 CHI.-KENT L. REV. 103 (2000). See also Brief of Amici Curiae Jack N. Rakove, Saul Cornell, David T. Konig, William J. Novak, Lois G. Schwoerer et al. in Support of Petitioners, \textit{Heller}, 128 S. Ct. 2783 (2008) (No. 07-290), 2008 WL 157183. Historians including Jack Rakove and Saul Cornell emphasize that the Second Amendment was responsive, not to the need for private self-defense, but rather to a deep fear of a standing army and the debate over how control over militias would be allocated between the federal and state governments. Id. Indeed, the first laws resembling contemporary gun control were not passed until after the War of 1812, well after ratification. See \textit{Cornell}, supra, at 142.
bates made arguments for Second Amendment rights intelligible as arguments about guns, and much more. Commonly, advocates asserted Second Amendment rights in a language of law and order that associated restoration of the constitutional order with restoration of the traditional social order.

Law-and-order critics of the Warren Court accepted the Brown settlement, and developed an identity and an idiom emphasizing fidelity to law that was self-consciously not racial, in part to enable Americans fighting over the reach of the Brown settlement to express concerns about race while fending off charges of racism. The gun rights movement employed this law-and-order idiom to defend the traditional social order in matters of race, family, and faith. Making common cause with critics of the Warren and Burger Courts as part of a New Right coalition, gun rights advocates armed for a “cultural war” to secure government’s fidelity to the founders’ true heirs.

The New Right embraced originalism as the jurisprudential vehicle for these claims. Now that conservatives were beginning to exercise authority in the Republican Party, and from Congress, the Justice Department, and the bench, the original understanding provided authority that could legitimate their new exercises of public authority as the Constitution — supplying reason, not only to limit judicial review, but to expand it in new ways.

The New Right’s understanding of the original understanding was populist and popular, but clearly partisan — by no means consensual, or even majoritarian. Its gun-rights agenda had majority support in only the thinnest of senses. Because the leaders of the gun rights movement could deliver single-issue voters who would decide elections at the margin and punish insufficiently responsive officials, the movement was able to secure the cooperation of government and defeat gun control efforts, even on issues where the gun rights movement lacked public support.

---


253 See supra sections II.C and II.D.

254 See THOMAS M. KECK, THE MOST ACTIVIST SUPREME COURT IN HISTORY: THE ROAD TO MODERN JUDICIAL CONSERVATISM 7 (2004) (presenting a political history of “the emergence of conservative activism” on the Rehnquist Court); Keith E. Whittington, The New Originalism, 2 GEO. J.L. & PUB. POL’Y 599, 608–09 (2004) (distinguishing traditional judicial restraint from a “new originalism” that while emphasizing “the limited authority of the judicial role in the constitutional system . . . may often require the active exercise of the power of judicial review in order to keep faith with the principled commitments of the founding.”).

255 See BILL CLINTON, MY LIFE 630 (2004) (“After the [1994 midterm] election I had to face the fact that the law-enforcement groups and other supporters of responsible gun legislation,
Heller enforces the original understanding in ways that are responsive to this complex mandate. After decades of gun mobilization, a large majority of Americans believe that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to bear arms. But a large majority of Americans also believe that government can regulate gun ownership and prohibit military-style weapons through laws such as the assault weapons ban. Heller seems to register this complex of popular beliefs when it holds that the Second Amendment protects weapons that the law-abiding citizen needs to defend himself and his family from crime — but not the military weapons citizens need to resist government tyranny.

These two dimensions of Heller’s holding shed light on the kind of authority Heller exercises — the ways its originalism connects the constitutional convictions of Americans dead and living. The Heller Court bitterly divides over whether there is historical evidence for reading the Second Amendment as codifying a common law right of self-defense, but agrees that the framers of the Second Amendment sought to prevent government tyranny. Yet the majority treats though they represented the majority of Americans, simply could not protect their friends in Congress from the NRA. The gun lobby outspent, outorganized, outfought, and outdemagogued them.”; FELDMAN, supra note 199, at 229 (describing the NRA’s successful campaign to unseat Jack Brooks, “the longest serving member of the House” at the time, as “payback for Jack’s vote for the crime bill that contained the assault weapons ban,” despite the fact that Brooks had been “one of the NRA’s oldest and closest congressional allies”); Noam N. Levey, NRA’s Political Clout Is Waning, L.A. TIMES, June 14, 2008, at A1. For polling data, see infra notes 256–257.

See Joan Biskupic, Do You Have a Legal Right to Own a Gun?, USA TODAY, Feb. 27, 2008, at 1A (“Nearly three out of four Americans — 73% — believe the Second Amendment spells out an individual right to own a firearm . . . .”); ICR Survey Research Group Poll, Aug. 15-19, 1997, The Roper Center at the University of Connecticut [hereinafter Roper Center Database], study no. USICR1997-933M, available at LEXIS, News Library, RPOL file (reporting that sixty-eight percent of respondents believed that the Second Amendment “guarantees individuals the right to own guns”).


See supra Part I.

See, e.g., Heller, 128 S. Ct. at 2801–02 (arguing that the Second Amendment was codified to “assure the existence of a ‘citizens’ militia’ as a safeguard against tyranny”); id. at 2840 (Stevens,
weaponry traditionally used for individual self-defense as presumptively protected and military weaponry as presumptively regulable. In 2008, Americans can appeal to the law-and-order Second Amendment as the founders’ Second Amendment and can make claims on others outside their normative community through it — as they could not if they were to embrace a republican Second Amendment that authorized violent insurrection and the forms of originalism the militias practiced in the 1990s. Thus, even if, on further examination of the historical sources, we continued to debate whether the founders codified a right of self-defense, we can learn from the Heller Court’s reticence to protect arms needed to resist government tyranny that originalism implicitly depends on contemporary popular convictions for its authority.

The shape of the right Heller protects demonstrates how a judicial decision claiming original authority may nonetheless employ practices of responsive interpretation associated with democratic constitutionalism. At the same time, it illustrates how constitutional politics can guide and discipline judicial review. As one of many factors that give shape to law, movement conflict constrains, as well as motivates, the claims mobilized Americans make on their courts. After decades of argument, advocates recognize that the public responds, fitfully, to the claims of both the gun rights and gun control movements, and so each movement has come to incorporate, at least in part, the claims of the other. When gun control leaders could not win support for a national handgun ban, they began to argue that the category of “assault weapons” could be regulated under the Second Amendment. Just as many who support gun control now, cautiously, acknowledge the Second Amendment’s authority, many who embrace the original under-

J., dissenting) (describing Justice Story’s explanation of “the virtues of the militia as a bulwark against tyranny”); see also supra note 39 and accompanying text.

260 See Post & Siegel, Originalism as a Political Practice, supra note 10; Post & Siegel, Roe Rage, supra note 10.

261 There are a variety of constraints shaping Heller, from the historical evidence over which a divided Court argued to the appointments process that produced the divided Court.

262 See Siegel, Constitutional Culture, supra note 10, at 1330–31 (“As movement and counter-movement struggle to persuade (or recruit) uncommitted members of the public, each movement is forced to take account of the other’s arguments, and in time may even begin to incorporate aspects of the other’s argument into its own claims . . . . Bitter constitutional dispute can be hermeneutically constructive, and has little noticed socially integrative effects.”).


264 For example, New York Senator Charles Schumer, who in 1995 declared that “[t]he [S]econd [A]mendment does not guarantee the mythical individual right to bear arms,” Gun Laws and the Need for Self-Defense: Hearing Before the H. Subcomm. on Crime of the H. Comm. of the Judiciary, 104th Cong. 3 (1995), in 2002 articulated “the broad principle that there is an individual right to bear arms,” Reforming the FBI in the 21st Century: Hearing of the S. Judiciary Comm., 107th Cong. 163 (2002). See also Democratic Nat’l Convention, Strong at Home, Re-
standing of the Second Amendment are prepared to renounce its republican purposes. Movement conflict can create these forms of apparent consensus without securing agreement. Constitutional conflict of this kind structures disagreement; it enables exercises of judicial review that can officially entrench new understandings of the Constitution as law — without immunizing them from renewed popular challenge.

SPECTED IN THE WORLD: THE 2004 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR AMERICA

Underlying the Democrats’ and the NRA’s increasingly similar formulations of the right remain vastly different views about its regulability. See Jonathan Martin, NRA Plans $40M Fall Blitz Targeting Obama, POLITICO, June 30, 2008, http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0608/11452.html (reporting the NRA’s plans to spend fifteen million dollars “portraying Barack Obama as a threat to the Second Amendment rights upheld in Heller); Jacob Sullum, Isn’t Self-Defense Common Sense?, REASONONLINE, Feb. 27, 2008, http://www.reason.com/news/show/125180.html (“Although [Senator Obama] has learned to pay lip service to the Second Amendment, the details of his past and present positions on gun control suggest he neither understands nor respects the right to keep and bear arms.”). Progressives who now recognize individual rights under the Second Amendment generally believe the Constitution allows many more forms of gun control than do conservatives. Compare The O’Reilly Factor (Fox News Channel television broadcast Apr. 23, 2007) (featuring Sen. Charles Schumer saying “I think certain kinds of licensing and registration is a reasonable limitation. We do it for cars.”), with NRA-ILA, Fact Sheet: Licensing and Registration, Oct. 7, 2000, http://www.nraila.org/Issues/FactSheets/Read.aspx?id=28 (“[T]hose who wonder what motivates American gun owners should understand that perhaps only one other word in the English language so boils their blood as ‘registration,’ and that word is ‘confiscation.’ Gun owners fiercely believe those words are ominously related.”). The Democrats recently adopted a party platform that provides:

We . . . will preserve Americans’ Second Amendment right to own and use firearms. We believe that the right to own firearms is subject to reasonable regulation, . . . and [w]e can work together to enact and enforce commonsense laws and improvements — like closing the gun show loophole, improving our background check system, and reinstating the assault weapons ban, so that guns do not fall into the hands of terrorists or criminals.


See Siegel, Constitutional Culture, supra note 10.
The Court’s judgment in *Heller* will exert authority as law, to the extent that its account of the original understanding can sustain intergenerational identification. As the rift in the *Heller* Court testifies, struggle over the meaning of constitutional memory is a medium through which community in disagreement is forged. Long public struggle endowed memories of the founding with significance for living Americans and assembled a Court to recover them; but that Court and the nation to which it speaks remain, visibly, riven. In 2008, the Supreme Court, the Republican Party platform, and the Democratic Party platform all recognize that the Second Amendment confers some form of individual right. Yet, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the scope of this right and its constitutional implications remain to be decided.268

---

268 As this Comment goes to press, the Republican presidential nominee has energized his campaign by selecting an anti-abortion, pro-gun female vice-presidential running mate, who, when introduced at the party’s nominating convention, demonstrated her qualifications by mocking the “community organizing” experience of the first black presidential candidate ever nominated by a major political party — with apparent impunity and to great partisan acclaim. Cf. Erik Engquist, *Attack on Obama Carries Racial Overtones, Says Paterson*, CRAIN’S N.Y. BUSINESS.COM, Sept. 9, 2008, http://mycrains.crainsnewyork.com/paterson/2008/09/attack-on-obama-carries-racial.html (“Gov. David Paterson this morning said that Republicans’ ridiculing of Sen. Barack Obama’s community organizing carries racial overtones. . . . McCain spokesman Peter Feldman [countered] ‘[t]his is a tactic that the Obama campaign has used before, and which McCain campaign manager Rick Davis correctly called “divisive, shameful, and wrong.”’”). The party’s platform affirms the right to bear arms and calls for a President who will appoint judges who will interpret the Constitution as *Heller* did. REPUBLICAN NAT’L CONVENTION, 2008 REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM 51 (2008), http://platform.gop.com/2008Platform.pdf (“We applaud the Supreme Court’s decision in *Heller* affirming [the right to own firearms], and we . . . call on the next president to appoint judges who will similarly respect the Constitution.”).