

Extremist legislator ignores serious problem of gun violence

By HARRIS W. MARTIN

Commendations to state Reps. Chris King, D-142; Tony Melio, D-141; David Steil, R-31; and John Galloway, D-140, for voting in favor of House Bill 1845, which would have required handgun owners to report a stolen or lost handgun within three days of it being discovered lost or stolen. Failure to do so would result in summary charges on the first offense and a felony on the third offense. Note that this bill applied only to handguns, not rifles, shotguns, etc.

My opponent in this year's election, Republican Gene DiGirolamo, voted against this bill because he said "I will not put people who are good citizens in legal jeopardy just because they did not know that their gun was lost or stolen." Excuse me but the bill said "within three days of being discovered lost or stolen."

So, obviously, if the owner has not yet discovered the loss, he would not be breaking the law. Thus, DiGirolamo's argument is ridiculous and has no merit. We need better representation in Harrisburg.

The Second Amendment of the Constitution — and stated far more clearly in the Pennsylvania Constitution — guarantees the right of American citizens to bear arms. This includes handguns. I support these principals without question and if elected, will swear an oath to uphold and defend both the U.S. and Pennsylvania constitutions as every state representative must do when sworn in to office as specified in the state constitution.

House Bill 1845 did not conflict in any way with either constitution and as Rep. King was quoted saying, "would not impact the rights of lawful gun owners." It was a common sense public safety measure. According to King "The goal of this was to go after people selling guns illegally and in bulk and selling them out of the trunks of their cars."

As the Courier Times' editorial the same day pointed out, this was "a proposal targeting illegal handgun trafficking" and this "reporting requirement would place straw-purchasers within the law's reach."

As Rep. Melio pointed out, "Why can't you report your stolen guns? Seems easy enough to me. These lawmakers need to realize that we have a serious problem of gun violence in our state and it needs to be addressed."

He's right.

If your car is stolen or your house broken into and robbed, you report it to the police because it is in your best interest and the community's interest to do so. It is the same with guns except, since lost and stolen guns are often obtained by criminals and then sold to other criminals who use them to commit crimes, it makes a lot of sense to require the reporting by law as a matter of public safety.

I have a C-minus rating from the NRA because although I firmly support our constitutional right to bear arms and our hunting and fishing heritage, I agree as most people do that some common sense public safety measures are needed to stem the tide of gun violence. How many more must die?

My opponent, extremist Republican DiGirolamo, has an A rating from the NRA because he votes against even the most modest, practical, and common sense public safety measures regarding firearms. To get an A rating from the NRA, a politician needs to have a voting record that reflects an

extremist fringe interpretation of the Second Amendment. DiGirolamo's extremist firearms voting record is literally getting people killed — our people.

That is not in the best interests of you and me, the residents of the 18th house district. He has been in for 14 years voting in this extremist way. That's long enough. He needs to go. You deserve better.

Harris W. Martin, Bensalem, is the Democratic candidate for the 18th Legislative District. He is a wetland scientist who holds degrees in soil science, plant science, and environmental science.

[April 23, 2008 5:04 AM](#)