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The Minuteman

Tennessee Firearms Association's

Monthly Newsletter



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TFA: A Strong Voice For Tennessee's Gun Owners

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Increasing Our Membership

In order for the Tennessee Firearms Association to continue to protect the rights of Tennessee's gun owners we must continue to increase our membership. The best way for us to spread the word about the work TFA is doing is for members like you to tell other gun owners about us. Here are just a few ways that the TFA is working for you.

The Tennessee Firearms Association-Legislative Action Committee (TFA-LAC) works in the political arena to lobby for laws and regulations that ensure the continued preservation of our rights. For over ten years the TFA-LAC has been representing Tennessee's gun owners by working with state legislators to insure that the best interests of our members are protected on Capitol Hill.

The TFA has established itself as a voice for gun owner's rights with the media across the state. We are working to insure that both sides of gun issues are represented in the news. John Harris, the Director of TFA, has been interviewed by numerous media outlets to insure that the views of gun owners are being heard. TFA has become a strong voice for Tennessee's gun owners.

To keep the TFA strong we need to continue to gain new members. If you would like to get more information about joining the TFA check out our web site at: www.tennesseefirearms.com.

Membership Levels for TFA are:

Life - \$500.00
Five Year - \$120.00
Three Year - \$90.00
Family Annual - \$45.00
Individual Annual - \$35.00
Business/Club Annual - \$75.00

Help us to grow by inviting someone to join today.

TFA's 10th Anniversary Event Update

Here is the latest on the TFA's 10th Anniversary Event. The Event **was** scheduled for May 14th at the National Guard Armory in Nashville. We were advised this week that the National Guard will now have drills that weekend and we will have to therefore select another weekend (in June) or another location.

If you have time or experience in setting up events in the Nashville area, please contact John Harris at TFA at johnharris@tennesseefirearms.com concerning this project.

Legislative Update

Tax Free Gun Safes & SJR 85

The 2005 legislative session is off and running and of course gun issues will once again be only a part of the action. During the session, the TFA will be keeping you updated on the different bills that are filed dealing with gun issues and their progress through the committees.

While TFA feels good about the Senate this year, we are very concerned about the status of our bills in the House. Almost all of them have been dumped into the Constitutional Protections Subcommittee of the House Judiciary which has a majority of legislators who have provided very little if any support for Tennessee gun owners.

This month we are highlighting a few of the bills that have been filed so far this session. State Senator Rosalind Kurita has filed Senate Bill 12 which is her attempt to promote gun safety and gun safe manufacturers by increasing the sale of gun safes in Tennessee.

Senator Kurita, who is coming off of a hard re-election campaign during which her position on gun issues played a major role, is looking for opportunities to improve her image on gun matters. SB 12 will exempt gun safes from local and state sales tax. Here is some of the reasoning behind SB 12. In the financial impact statement filed in support of the bill, it was noted that an estimated 2,500 gun safes are sold in Tennessee each year and that the average price of those safes are around \$900. The statement asserts that exempting the safes from sales tax would allow gun owners to purchase higher quality safes. Of course the bill's supporters say they are promoting gun safety.

Of course we won't be hearing about the negative side of the bill. In a time of fiscal hardship for the state and most county governments, the new exemption will mean that \$157,500 less tax dollars will be collected for the state and \$50,625 less tax dollars for county governments. If Senator Kurita and the other sponsors of SB 12 really want to promote greater gun safety then they could join TFA's effort to require gun safety classes as part of Tennessee's K-12 educational curriculum.

State Senator Jeff Miller has filed Senate Joint Resolution 85 which is designed to protect gun manufacturers, distributors and importers. There is a growing national trend of lawsuits being filed that seek to collect damages from these entities for the misuse of guns by third parties. These suits are part of a nationwide campaign to cripple the gun industry just like the tobacco industry was affected during the 1990's. Senator Miller has filed SJR 85 to ensure that Tennessee's courts aren't used for these types of frivolous lawsuits. TFA will be tracking SJR 85's progress and keep you informed.

Hunting and Fishing News

Just in case you have been noticing the long lines at the Hunting and Fishing Licensing centers there is a good reason for it. Smart sportsmen are trying to beat the price increase! Despite what legislators and sportsmen were told last session by TWRA officials, the cost of getting hunting and fishing licenses are increasing - substantially. Last session the State Legislature removed the TWRA from legislative oversight and gave it the authority to raise license fees. It didn't take them long after last year's election to announce a 35% increase effective March 2005. Many of you will remember that TFA was one of the few voices that spoke out against removing legislative oversight from the TWRA but the bill sponsored by House Speaker Jimmy Naifeh passed easily.

Allen Gebhardt, an assistant director for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency was quoted in newspapers across the state as saying, "It's at the point of either raising revenues or making serious cuts in programs that the sportsmen are used to us doing." Gebhardt continued "After this overall increase, we will have the authority to make smaller increases every few years rather than one big one ... and any future increases are limited to inflation." Just to clear up one small point in Mr. Gebhardt's statement, the TWRA has no limits to how many or on how

large an increase they can impose. A year ago we would have been encouraging you to complain to your State Representative and State Senator but now Tennessee's sportsmen will just have to get used to paying more and more "regularly".

The Jackson Sun, the leading newspaper in Madison County, is running an interesting on-line poll concerning hunting rights. The poll wants to see if there would be any support for some lawmakers who want to propose a Constitutional Amendment protecting hunting rights.

The Jackson Sun reports that some state lawmakers fear that Tennessee's wild game hunting heritage might be in danger. The concerns over the actions of animal rights activists has lead to a proposition for a constitutional amendment making hunting a basic right in Tennessee. If the proposed amendment should be passed then Tennessee would join the ranks of 21 other states that have either adopted such hunters' rights or are considering them. Opponents say it is unnecessary and would bog down the General Assembly and unnecessarily encumber the Constitution. Once the details of the bill are released TFA will keep you updated and we will be following this movement closely during this session.

SENTRY

TFA plans to print the Sentry with a full legislative report by the end of March. We welcome submissions. If you have a commentary on some topic of interest, a report on your local gun club or TFA chapter, a letter to the editor, or anything else that might be of interest or encouragement to other TFA members, please feel free to submit it for consideration to johnharris@tennesseefirearms.com - please format your submissions in ASCII text and proofread them.

TFA also needs volunteers to work on expanding the Sentry to include more articles and perhaps even advertising.

MINUTEMAN

This is our second edition. I hope it is not our last. However, the work to publish this is too much when I add the Sentry, the legislative reports, and general TFA administrative work on to the load. Without help, this service will discontinue soon. If you can help, please contact me ASAP. Thanks - John Harris