

March 2018 Message from President Howie Hirsch

I usually try and avoid controversy in my monthly messages and almost never get political, but I feel that I must take a stand at this time.

The school shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, has gotten me crazy. I cannot understand how politicians and responsible gun owners think that assault rifles belong outside the military and police force in our society.

In Warren County, New Jersey, there are many responsible hunters who take care of their firearms, hunt cautiously, do not put others at risk, and then use the animals that they hunt for food as well as make use of the other parts of the animals. While not a hunter, I have no problem with these hunters, nor do I think that, as an American, anyone should take the right to defend me or my family away from me by not allowing me to own a gun. However, if I must choose between the rights of the gun owners to have these assault weapons and to watch school children being slaughtered, I will choose the side of the children.

The fact that teenagers cannot buy a cigarette, alcohol or even a lottery ticket in most places, but have no problem going into a gun store and buying a gun is appalling to me. Luckily, this is not the case in New Jersey where you must be 18 and obtain a NJ Firearms Purchaser ID Card.

I know that I live as a liberal Jew and that the conservatives will not agree with me, but I think we need to vote out any politician who is accepting money from the NRA.

If we have lawmakers in Congress who are not beholden to this special interest group, then maybe we will have a chance to have a real conversation about what gun control in this country should look like.

One of the things I have read since the shooting went something like this: In 1982, seven people died when Tylenol was replaced with poison. Since then, we have strict packaging standards to prevent a situation like this from happening again. In 1995, fertilizer was used to kill 168 people. Restrictions were put on the sale of this kind of fertilizer. In 2001, one person tried to blow up a plane with a shoe bomb. Since then, everyone getting on a plane must have their shoes screened by TSA.

What is the reason that we can't pass gun control when week after week, we hear of assault weapons killing our children? It can't only be a Second Amendment right, because to me, the fact that these teenagers from Parkland have been talking to the media is only a start. I have talked to some of my younger colleagues, who have been in school since Columbine occurred, and they tell me that this is the new normal. That you are afraid going into school, when your only concerns should be learning and making friends.

As a single person, my voice doesn't matter, but if we can get voice after voice to show our anger and vote these people out of office, that is what we must do.

Personally, I will check any candidate that I vote for, and if they are accepting money from the NRA, they will not get my vote.

Howie

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