

Melvin Landsberg
2410 Whitehall Manor
Lawrence, KS 66049
Telephone: (785) 749-1766

BRING AMENDMENT 2 TO THE U.S.

CONSTITUTION UP TO DATE

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. (Amendment in force since Dec. 15, 1791.)

We must assume that danger to this above-mentioned security might be from foreign nations, or from the U.S. government itself becoming tyrannical. Many of the people in colonial America had rifles that they used for hunting or eliminating varmints on their farms. Responding to messengers on horseback, Massachusetts farmers gathered together at Concord, Massachusetts, in 1775 and—using their own or their militia’s rifles—repelled invading British soldiers. Ralph Waldo Emerson celebrated the event in his “Concord Hymn,” sung on July 4, 1837:

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled,
Here one of the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

But once the new country was established, “embattled farmers” fought mainly against their own state or their national government—recall Shay’s Rebellion (1786-87) and the Whiskey Rebellion (1794).

In our own time the National Rifle Association has fought valiantly to extend the meaning of *arms* from what it was in 1791. Happily the interpretation has been extended to automatic weapons. But against the Federal government, with its enormous expenditures on armaments, including all manner of atomic weapons, and now unmanned drones, even automatic weapons would be of little help if the government should turn tyrannical.

I am alarmed by the arms gap between the U.S. government and the people, and propose that the Second Amendment be revised to read:

The right of the people to keep arms, not excluding atomic and thermonuclear weapons, and the means for their delivery, shall not be infringed.

It may be argued that only the extraordinarily rich could afford these weapons. But a much expanded market would, in time, drastically bring unit costs down. And small groups of less wealthy people could surely combine their resources to buy such weapons. I do not believe that the U.S. Supreme Court would or could invalidate the constitutional amendment if it had the N.R.A. and immense public sentiment behind it.

I do not wish to be celebrated for my proposal, nor do I wish to profit from it in any other way. Being eighty-four years old, I do not in fact expect to be around by the time it is implemented.

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Melvin Landsberg is a retired English professor