



24 | BARRIER-BREAKING STORE
WITH 50% NEW USERS

28 | HANDGUN SEGMENT ...
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50 | GET OUT, AND
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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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Out Of Training p. 40

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The Ruger American® Rifle Generation II is an update to the American-made rifle that has been the benchmark for accuracy, durability, and performance in bolt-action rifles for over a decade. Designed with customer feedback in mind, the Ruger American Rifle Generation II is available in a variety of calibers and is sure to become the first choice for hunters and firearms enthusiasts.



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X

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3 width, height
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SIG SAUER



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BARREL LENGTH
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CALIBER
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David Johnson, Johnson Gunsmithing LLC, Athens, AL

"Your program changed my life and I am now an AGI Certified Master Gunsmith. Hands down, the best knowledge base I have seen yet. The instructors are successful business owners and true Masters of their trade. Thank you for your dedication and perseverance. Our nations Veterans need more of you in the world! Bravo Zulu!!

James N. Woods, Master Gunsmith, CJ's Custom Shop

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The American Gunsmithing Institute's approval to operate as a private postsecondary institution in the state of California is based on provisions of the California Private Postsecondary Education Act (CPPEA) of 2009 (California Education Code, Title 3, Division 10, Part 59, Chapter 8), which was effective January 1, 2010. The Bureau can be reached at 2535 Capitol Oaks Drive, Suite 400, Sacramento, CA 95833, www.bppe.ca.gov, toll-free telephone number (888) 370-7589 or by fax (916) 263-1897. Professional Gunsmithing Courses not available to Oklahoma residents at this time.

When Hyperbole Is Reality

Election Day is Nov. 5. Early voting began in September in some states. It's no hyperbole: Every vote matters, as this single presidential election is likely to have decades of impact.

Inside this issue, Ava Flanell highlights the ramifications of voter apathy in "With Rights At Stake, Get Involved!" (p. 26).

To those apathetic voters, she contends: "Is it easier to turn a blind eye on your state and country than to take a few minutes out of your day and vote? Do not surrender what many countries do not have."

In *Industry Link*, Editor Jade Moldae sits down with NSSF's Larry Keane to discuss the NSSF's voter education drive, #GUNVOTE, and is quite candid about the ramifications if the Harris-Walz ticket wins the presidency (p. 50).

"If Harris is elected president, what we see from ATF now will only get worse. Zero tolerance for gun dealers will become 'subzero' tolerance," he said. "This is the most important election for the Second Amendment in our lifetime. People need to wake up, get registered and vote."

It's not too late to get involved in this voter registration and education effort, either, visit gunvote.org.

SECURITY OF A DIFFERENT KIND

As a dealer, you provide peace of mind to customers on a daily basis. But there's more to it than just having the right inventory and knowledgeable sales team. In today's digital world, you need to offer "another" kind of protection — cybersecurity. Dealers and industry partners share how vital cybersecurity is for e-commerce websites in a special feature by Peter Suci. For more, see p. 36.

THE "RIGBY ROOKIE"

We've not had many articles like this in *Shooting Industry*, and it's worth your time. Jay Pinsky met Slade Stevens, a 20-something engraver for



OCTOBER 2024

the acclaimed John Rigby & Co. last year and was struck by his maturity and dynamic knowledge — something Rigby Managing Director Marc Newton has keyed in on while building his London-based team.

"One of Rigby's real strengths is our very youthful team," he noted. "They're very progressive, outward-looking and ready to try new things. At Rigby, we ensure all our team members have various skills so they're not single-focused and can apply themselves to other tasks. This means we can be much more reactive as a team to get orders out."

To hear more about how Rigby is finding a niche in developing young, dynamic talent, see "The 'Rigby Rookie'" on p. 42.

NEXT MONTH: HIGH-END SALES

Speaking of high-end offerings, next month's issue zeroes in on premium firearms, and how you can expand profits in this category. Peter Suci interviews a cross-section of manufacturers, industry leaders and dealers, who share the ins and outs of tapping into this category (and inflation's impact).

Other features in the November issue include tips for developing year-end sales events, building support for those brands that support dealers, the "bottom line" of what a gunsmith can bring to your team and more.

Have a comment on something you see (or wish to see) in this issue? Contact the *SI* team anytime: comments@shootingindustry.com. **81**

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CUSTOMER LOYALTY CAN'T BE BOUGHT

Even though so many in our industry are struggling, we seem to be faring better than others due, in great part, to our amazing customers. In less than 10 years, we've grown from 500 sq. ft. and less than \$50,000 in inventory to roughly 6,800 sq. ft. and more than \$300,000 in inventory thanks to the support we've received from our customers.

We get new customers stopping in every day, mostly thanks to referrals from their friends, neighbors, co-workers, family or even somebody they ran into at the "big-box" store where they couldn't get what they wanted.

Our customers are 100% the reason we have grown and thrived like we have. And they let us know at every visit how much they appreciate us being here. They tell us regularly they like shopping local. They want to support a small business and they like the personal touch. They feel like friends, not just buyers.

Over the years, we tried a couple of "Rewards" or "Loyalty" programs but when we changed card-processing companies, we ended up phasing those

“**They understand we can't always compete on price, but they also know they can count on us if there is a problem.**”

out. We prefer to keep our margins low and show appreciation to every customer — not just our "frequent flyers." Our customers are greeted as friends when

they come in. If they have questions, we try to get the answers. If they're looking for something we don't have, if we can get it, we order it for them and call them when it comes in. They understand we can't always compete on price, but they also know they can count on us if there is a problem.

The only downside to the amazing loyalty of our customers is they're making it extremely painful for us to retire at the end of this year. At 70 and 71, we've decided it's time to retire. We're looking for a buyer, and have had some interest, but as of now, we haven't been able to close a deal. All of our "regulars" know we're planning to retire and ask, "Have you found anybody to take over? Sure hope you do. I don't know where else we'd go."

When we get to talking about it, it's hard not to get emotional. They're invested in seeing the store continue to grow and thrive and usually leave offering to pray for a buyer, or at least hoping we find a buyer. You can't buy that kind of customer loyalty. **SI**

— **Kathy A Pitcock • Partner**
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HAVE A THOUGHT WHILE READING THE ISSUE?

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◀ (From left) D&M VP of Business Dev. James Jones; D&M VP of Operations BJ Rogers; Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders; and D&M President & CEO Dan Powers.

D&M ANNOUNCES EXPANSION OF PRIMER FACILITY & NEW SMOKELESS PROPELLANT FACTORY

D&M Holding Company Inc. (D&M), an ammunition and energetics engineering company, is investing \$70 million to expand its current White River Energetics (WRE) ammunition primer and energetics facility in Des Arc, Ark., and build a single-base, smokeless propellant factory.

“Currently, there is a worldwide shortage of smokeless propellant that is affecting munitions availability globally,” said Dan Powers, president and CEO of D&M Holding Company, Inc. “This will be the first single-base propellant factory to be built in the U.S. in over 50 years.”

White River Energetics currently has 125 employees at the Des Arc facility, with 73 new employees added in the past year. The expansion will create 100 new jobs and increase the Des Arc campus

from 14,000 sq. ft. to more than 100,000 sq. ft. of manufacturing space.

Construction on the expansion is underway and expected to be completed Q1 2026.

“We’re proud of all the people and employees who have worked tirelessly to support WRE and make this happen,” said BJ Rogers, D&M VP of operations. “Having grown up in Des Arc, I’m personally proud to see the successes that have been made with primers and look forward to continued success in the future production of propellant.”

This expansion will enable WRE to scale its energetics and primer manufacturing to meet customer demand as well as develop new products.

“This expanded campus also provides a facility for R&D and for training for

our customers for whom we are building factories around the world,” said James Jones, D&M VP of business development.

D&M is an ammunition and energetics engineering company based in Tampa, Fla., and Cabot, Ark. D&M specializes in design and manufacture of ammunition and energetics equipment and turnkey factories for customers worldwide. WRE is a wholly owned subsidiary of D&M, located in Des Arc, Ark. with the objective of manufacturing energetics for the ammunition industry.



This will be the first single-base propellant factory to be built in the U.S. in over 50 years.”

Dan Powers - President & CEO
D&M Holding Company, Inc.

D&M and WRE supports domestic and international clients in the defense and sporting markets through its development of turnkey factories, and its manufacturing and distribution of energetics for various types of ammunition, including primers for small and large caliber pistols and rifles.

[/ dmholding.com](http://dmholding.com)
[/ whiteriverenergetics.com](http://whiteriverenergetics.com)

SSSF AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS TO YOUTH ATHLETES

The Scholastic Shooting Sports Foundation (SSSF) recently awarded scholarships from the newly established SSSF Bruno Butti and Mae (Domenica Careri) Butti Scholarship Fund to a group of outstanding youth athletes.

Scholarships of \$3,000 each were awarded to 10 youth shooting athletes of the SSSF’s Scholastic Clay Target

Program (SCTP) and Scholastic Action Shooting Program (SASP). They represented six different states.

The SSSF is a 501(c)(3) public charity responsible for all aspects of the SCTP and SASP across the U.S. Since 2013, the SSSF has awarded over \$818,000 in scholarship funds benefiting over 900 student athletes.

The SCTP and SASP are youth development programs in which adult coaches and other volunteers use shooting sports to teach and to



demonstrate sportsmanship, responsibility, honesty, ethics, integrity, teamwork and other positive life skills. They pass on to future generations the legacy of lifelong, safe, responsible enjoyment of the shooting sports.

[/ sssffonline.org](http://sssffonline.org)

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INDUSTRY NEWS

HAVA HOSTS DESCHUTES RIVER TRIP FOR VETERANS, FIRST RESPONDERS

Honored American Veterans Afield (HAVA) recently co-sponsored a fly-fishing trip for veterans and first responders on the Deschutes River in central Oregon. The drift-boat trip allowed participants to share stories and build connections with others who have faced similar challenges, all while fishing for rainbow trout.

The Deschutes River experience reaffirmed HAVA's purpose yet again by reintegrating disabled veterans and first responders into a normal American life through first-rate outdoor events.

The adventure not only provided healing, but also educated others about



Smiles all around during a fly-fishing trip down the Deschutes River for first responders and veterans, co-sponsored by HAVA.

the unique issues faced by those who serve. Skilled guides, great camps and spectacular food added even more to the experience.

Sustaining sponsor companies of HAVA are Smith & Wesson, NSSF, SIG SAUER, Academi, Arnold Defense,

Crimson Trace, FMG Publications, GLOCK, Hornady, Leapers/UTG, Leupold & Stevens, Mossberg, RSR Group, Ruger, SureFire, Taurus, Vista Outdoor/Federal, XS Sights and Yamaha Outdoors.

[/ honoredveterans.org](http://honoredveterans.org)

SECOND AMENDMENT FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES 50TH ANNIVERSARY VIDEO SERIES

The Second Amendment Foundation (SAF) announced the release of a video series commemorating SAF's work over the past 50 years.

The unique video series, "Reflections: Five Decades of SAF's 2A Advocacy," takes viewers on a historical journey of SAF, showcasing its commitment to defend, secure and restore the Second Amendment.

The SAF will release a total of 18 videos, each offering a unique perspective on the organization's work over the past five decades. The videos will be shared weekly on SAF's website and social media platforms, leading up to a longer-form

video scheduled to be released on Aug. 26, SAF's official anniversary date.

"This video series is a great way to showcase SAF and celebrate 50 years of Second Amendment advocacy. The series is a testament to the dedication and perseverance of SAF, and celebrates the countless members, donors and corporate partners who have supported us over the past five decades," said SAF Founder and Executive VP Alan M. Gottlieb.

Video interviews were conducted with some of the top Second Amendment advocates, scholars and attorneys across the nation. They provide a unique history of not only SAF, but also of Second Amendment case law.

"We encourage everyone to take a few moments out of their week to watch these short videos. The information contained is a testament to the countless hours and hard work that have made SAF a leader in



Second Amendment litigation," said SAF Executive Director Adam Kraut.

The Second Amendment Foundation is the nation's oldest and largest tax-exempt education, research, publishing and legal-action group focusing on the Constitutional right and heritage to privately own and possess firearms. The foundation today has more than 720,000 members and supporters, and oversees many programs designed to better inform the public about the consequences of gun control.

[/ saf.org](http://saf.org)

SAAMI ACCEPTS 5.7X28 FN CARTRIDGE

Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers' Institute Inc. (SAAMI) has announced the acceptance of the 5.7x28 FN centerfire pistol and revolver cartridge. SAAMI creates standards ensuring the safety, reliability

and interchangeability of firearms, ammunition and components.

The 5.7x28 FN, originally designed by FN Herstal, S.A., was proposed for standardization by SAAMI voting member Fiocchi of America, in partnership with FN America LLC.

The cartridge features a 40-grain bullet traveling at a velocity of 1,750 fps from a 5" test barrel and a Maximum Average



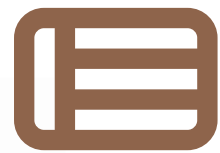
Pressure (MAP) of 48,500 psi. Performance data and cartridge and chamber dimensions on this new addition can be found on SAAMI's website.

[/ saami.org](http://saami.org)

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FREEDOM MUNITIONS CONSOLIDATES COMPONENT PRODUCTION

Freedom Munitions has announced the decision to consolidate projectile component production from X-Treme Bullets out of Nevada into its Lewiston, Idaho facilities.

The decision was made to streamline production and eliminate the dual inefficiencies between Carson City and Lewiston production. While several layoffs in Carson City did occur, other key employees have been offered remote and/or relocation opportunities to Idaho.

This measure adds production demand to Lewiston on the component side.

“Freedom Munitions has grown and evolved rapidly over the past several years, which has resulted in some duplication of roles and job functions that are difficult to justify today,” said Toby Thill, Freedom Munitions president. “The restructuring we are undertaking will reduce our costs and improve our operating model so we can thrive and continue to have controlled growth in the right areas. We are going to continue to invest in our future with more LAX retail store locations in California, while expanding the rifle casings caliber offerings in Idaho.”

X-Treme Bullets’ branded items



will remain available, and production processes for quality plated bullets and brass will not change. X-Treme’s products will continue to be available via www.xtremebullets.com, as well as through wholesale and OEM channels.

Freedom Munitions expects the Carson City facility to be fully shut down by end of 2024.

[/freedommunitions.com](http://freedommunitions.com)



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TASK FORCE EXPEDITION'S MOUNT KILIMANJARO CLIMB SUPPORTS MILITARY, FIRST RESPONDERS

Newly formed 501(c)(3) nonprofit Task Force Expedition (TFE) recently completed its inaugural campaign in July to raise awareness and funds for military, first responder and Second Amendment-related nonprofits. The campaign involved a summer climb by several industry-sponsored teams to the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania.

Brownells was the title industry sponsor, and other sponsors rounded out the adventure campaign's support. The climb was documented by Prelude Films and will be turned into a feature-length documentary to be released this fall.

Each sponsor was paired with a nonprofit organization to form a team.

Brownells teamed up with Special Operations Wounded Warrior (SOWW). Other teams included the American Suppressor Association Foundation, Frontline Healing Foundation, Special Operations Care Fund and a nonprofit from the UK that supports members of an elite British special forces unit.

The adventure itself wasn't a competition, but the five teams competed to see who could raise the most funding through public donations. By the end of the year, the funds raised by TFE will be pooled together and equally distributed among selected nonprofits.

"By partnering with Task Force Expedition, we are able to contribute to a cause that aligns with our values and supports our heroes. We are honored to be part of this initiative and look forward to seeing the positive outcomes it will generate," said Pete Brownell, secretary of TFE and chairman of Brownells.

"We are incredibly grateful to Pete and the team at Brownells for their



unwavering support. Simply put, their donation made Task Force Expedition possible. We have a tremendous opportunity to make a big impact on the lives of the people that rely on the services provided by these nonprofits. I look forward to working with Pete and his team to climb both the literal and the proverbial mountain ahead as we join forces for a greater good," said Knox Williams, president of TFE and the American Suppressor Association Foundation.

[/ taskforceexpedition.com](http://taskforceexpedition.com)

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northamericanarms.com



FN, TRUE VELOCITY TO PRODUCE LIGHTWEIGHT MACHINE GUN FOR U.S., ALLIED FORCES

FN America announced the expansion of its strategic licensing and manufacturing alliance with True Velocity Ammo Inc. to produce True Velocity's .338 Norma Lightweight Medium Machine Gun for U.S. and Allied military units.

The international strategic alliance positions FN as the primary manufacturer of Texas-based True Velocity's .338 Norma machine gun, both in the U.S. and the UK. The .338 is a recoil-mitigated weapon system designed to provide warfighters with range and terminal performance similar to that of the .50-caliber M2 machine gun. The lightweight, functional profile is comparable to that of the M240 machine gun, also manufactured by FN.

In March 2024, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) selected True Velocity's



.338 Norma Lightweight Medium Machine Gun for continued evaluation in a military program aimed at fielding a weapon system that would bridge the performance gap between the .50-caliber M2 machine gun and the M240 machine gun chambered for 7.62x51mm NATO.

"True Velocity's .338 machine gun will change the battlefield for our warfighters. It very quickly became clear that FN is a world-renowned, reliable and respected manufacturer of innovative machine guns, and we're excited for them to join our mission," said True Velocity President and Chief Intellectual Property Officer Craig Etchegoyen.

Over the past 40 years, FN's production facility in Columbia, S.C., has produced

more than a million small arms under contract to DOD. The company also has manufactured the M4A1, M16A4, M249 light machine gun, M240 medium machine gun and FN SCAR for the U.S. military.

"The natural teaming between True Velocity and FN America ensures success by combining the new technology designs of TV and the decades of manufacturing and U.S. government support of FN America. And it's equally exciting to extend the alliance globally through our sister company FN UK as we expand the growing relationship and joint expertise that TV and FN bring," said Jim Williams, VP of military programs for FN America.

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NSSF ANNOUNCES RECENT PROTECT LIBERTY PAC CONTRIBUTIONS

NSSF's Protect Liberty Political Action Committee (Protect Liberty PAC) announced recent contributions from Range USA (\$40,000), Taurus Holdings (\$25,000) and Silencer Shop's CEO Dave Matheny (\$25,000).

The Protect Liberty PAC exists to support the election of candidates who will work to safeguard Americans' freedoms, especially those involving the Second Amendment.

"We thank Range USA's President Tom Willingham for his leadership within the firearm industry. If elected to the presidency, Vice President Kamala Harris would be even more hostile to the firearm industry and the Second Amendment than President Joe Biden has been, with the vice president by his side," said Lawrence G.

Keane, Protect Liberty PAC treasurer.

"I challenge my industry colleagues to join this fight and contribute to Protect Liberty PAC because our rights and the future of our industry are on the ballot on Election Day," said Bret Vorhees, president and CEO of Taurus Holdings Inc.

"It is chilling to think about what the future could hold if we don't do everything we can to push back against the continued infringement on our rights that we see every day from this administration and those in elected office who would do away with the right to keep and bear arms in the blink of an eye. Silencer Shop is proud to stand with NSSF, Protect Liberty PAC and all our industry colleagues who are joining together in this worthy effort," Matheny said.

Protect Liberty PAC is a federally registered "super PAC" founded in 2023 by NSSF. It is an independent-expenditure-only political committee, and can accept unlimited personal and corporate contributions from companies



in or outside of the industry, so long as they do not have federal contracts. Protect Liberty PAC will expressly advocate for the election or defeat of specific candidates and that advocacy will be completely independent of any candidate or political party.

Contributions to Protect Liberty PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Protect Liberty PAC can accept unlimited personal and corporate contributions. However, contributions from foreign nationals, federal contractors, national banks and federally chartered corporations are prohibited.

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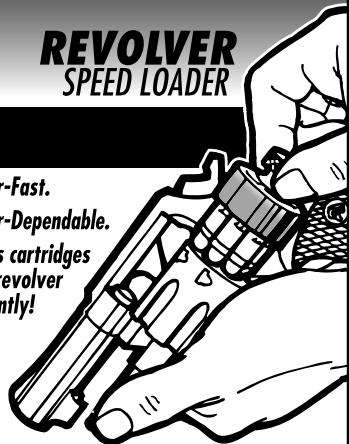
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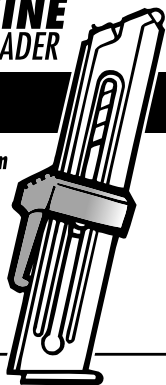
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NEW PARTNERSHIPS

DISTRIBUTION

Sports South announced a new distribution agreement with **Kimber**. Kimber's distinguished pistols, rifles and revolvers will be available to Sports South's network of dealers.

"We're proud to welcome Kimber to the Sports South family," said Cullen Gilbert, Sports South VP of supply chain. "Partnering with Kimber allows us to offer our dealers an unparalleled selection of premium firearms. We're excited to bring their exceptional products to our network and strengthen our commitment to excellence."

Lipsey's expanded its product line, which now includes **Streamlight** and **Radian Weapons**.

"Lipsey's is dedicated to finding the highest-quality manufacturers to better serve our dealer network," said Jared Duet, Lipsey's purchasing lead. "Both Streamlight and Radian Weapons are stars in the firearms industry and are valued additions to our catalog."

Powder Valley Outdoors broadened its shooting gear selection with new offerings from top brands, including **DeSantis Gunhide**, **Blackhawk**, **Tasco**, **Bushnell**, **Hooyman** and **Schrade**.

INTERNATIONAL

APEX Ammunition announced its partnership with **Canuck Guns** for distribution of its award-winning shotshells throughout Canada. Canuck now stocks APEX Waterfowl Blends and S3 Steel loads in 12- and 20-gauge.

"Canuck Guns is proud to partner with APEX Ammunition to bring the very best in custom-loaded hunting shotshells to Canada," said Phil O'Dell, Canuck Guns president. "I personally used their ammunition for my Royal Slam of five different wild turkey subspecies in 2023. It took exactly five shells. This ammo simply works like no other."

"We are pleased to partner with the Canuck Guns team to ensure more Canadian hunters have access to our line of handcrafted ammunition through their local dealers and outfitters," added Jason Lonsberry, president and CEO of Apex Ammunition.

Voodoo Gun Works named **Go Big Tactical** as its exclusive distributor for the Canadian market. This partnership ensures all Canadian orders, whether from individual customers or dealers, will be handled by Go Big Tactical.

"[Go Big Tactical's] commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction aligns perfectly with our values, and we are confident this partnership will enhance the experience for our Canadian customers," said Jacob Herman, Voodoo Gun Works CEO.

SALES REPRESENTATION

Taylor's & Company selected **Ken Jefferies & Associates** as its sales agency of record for the central and eastern regions of the U.S. (States include: ND, SD, MN, IA, WI, NE, KS, OK, TX, LA, AR, MO, IL, IN, MI, OH, KY, TN, AL, GA, FL, SC, NC, VA, WV, PA, NY, VT, ME, MA, CT, NH, MD and DE.)

"Our highly educated army of sales professionals are integrated with the industry's top-tier dealers and product resellers," said Ken Jefferies, president of Ken Jefferies & Associates. "We strive to beat the competition by focusing on fundamentals, demonstrating integrity, exceeding expectations and serving as a trustworthy partner to our customers. We are thrilled to have the iconic Taylor's & Company brand as a part of our portfolio; their historical firearms are second to none."

Outtech announced new partnerships with **Antler King**, wildlife nutritional products producer, and **AcuRite**, a leader in time, temperature and weather instruments.

"Maintaining a healthy deer population is vital for the growth and success of the bowhunting industry," said John Seliga, president of Outtech. "The Antler King team are true experts in creating premium food plots, attractants and feed to ensure this."

Seliga continued, "Preparation for any outdoor activity is essential, and there's no doubt AcuRite is leading the way in their field. We view this collaboration as a fantastic opportunity to enhance our retailers' sales by introducing innovative products in these vital categories."

COLE FINE GUNS AND GUNSMITHING, B. RIZZINI INTRODUCE RIZZINI BR240 COLE SPECIAL

Cole Fine Guns and Gunsmithing has partnered with B. Rizzini to produce the exclusive Rizzini BR240 Cole Special. This new shotgun combines exceptional craftsmanship with cutting-edge, modern technology.

"We are thrilled to work with long-time partner B. Rizzini to introduce the Rizzini BR240 Cole Special to our customers. This collaboration represents a fusion of our shared commitment to excellence and innovation in the firearms industry. The Rizzini BR240 Cole Special is

a testament to the trusted craftsmanship and continued dedication of both our companies," said Rich Cole, owner of Cole Fine Guns and Gunsmithing.

Available in both 12- and 20-gauge, the Rizzini BR240 Cole Special offers a wide range of options. Each model boasts a Cerakote finish in semi-gloss black with gold accents for a sleek, sophisticated appearance. Additional features are an adjustable length-of-pull trigger and a Grade 3 Turkish walnut sporting stock built to Rich Cole's specifications. With a length of pull measuring 14.75", the BR240 Cole Special accommodates a wide range of shooters.

The Rizzini BR240 Cole Special also comes with five Cole Precision chokes for adapting to various shooting conditions. Additionally, the shotgun features Rizzini XL bore barrels with 5.25" forcing cones,



delivering improved patterns and reduced recoil.

Cole Fine Guns has a reputation for providing top-quality firearms and exceptional customer service. With its expertise in European shotguns, Cole has become a certified service and warranty center for multiple high-end shotgun manufacturers.

Rizzini's craftsmanship has set them apart from many other shotgun manufacturers since 1966. ^{SI}

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NEWSMAKERS



J. HODGDON

RCBS Expands Team

RCBS recently named Joel Hodgdon as the new marketing director, and Chris Rodgers as the digital and e-commerce senior manager.



C. RODGERS

Hodgdon will lead all facets of RCBS's marketing presence as well

as RCBS's product development strategy and responsibilities.

"Joel's addition to the RCBS staff personifies Hodgdon's commitment to our dedicated team at RCBS," said Steve Kerwald, Hodgdon Powder Company president and CEO.

Hodgdon's experience stems from roles at Remington Ammunition, Federal Ammunition, The Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and Hodgdon Powder Company.

Rodgers will oversee the Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) website sales operations, channel strategy, website updates and all aspects of digital marketing. He will also manage the Amazon business for RCBS and will assist as needed with other Hodgdon Powder Company brands.

Aaron Oelger, Hodgdon VP of marketing and corporate strategy, shared, "Chris's extensive experience in digital marketing, coupled with his deep understanding of the reloading and shooting industry, makes him the ideal candidate. We are thrilled to have him on board to lead our digital initiatives."

Rodgers joins RCBS from Vista Outdoor, where he held various roles in e-commerce sales, trade marketing and DTC.



G. HATT

BPI Outdoors Welcomes Brand Manager

BPI Outdoors welcomed Glenn Hatt as the VP of brand management.

He has responsibility for the BPI family of brands: Bergara, CVA, Quake, Powerbelt and Durasight.

BPI CEO Scot Fischer commented, "Hatt ... will play a pivotal role in driving the company's strategic initiatives and fostering continued growth."

He joins BPI with over 25 years of experience in the industry from roles at Browning/Winchester and most recently, Colt CZ Group.



Leupold & Stevens Inc. Promotes Sales Managers

Leupold & Stevens Inc. announced the promotion of three members to the new position of regional sales manager. Kevin Graves oversees the eastern region, Cody Braden manages the central region and Josh Andrews covers the western region.

"Since their first day on the team, Kevin, Cody and Josh have embraced and excelled within Leupold's high-performance culture," said Janos Jeszenszky, director of global commercial sales for Leupold & Stevens Inc.

Graves, Braden and Andrews all joined Leupold as territory sales managers in 2021.



D. JASA

Stan Outdoors Names Sales/Marketing Director

Stan Outdoors named Dan Jasa its director of sales and marketing where

he will lead the sales team and be responsible for developing and overseeing product-led sales strategies and enhancing customer satisfaction at all levels.

Eric Springer, president of Stan Outdoors, said, "Dan's experiences across the target and hunting markets align with our customer goals and company vision. I'm looking forward to the impact

he will have at Stan Outdoors by enhancing our responsiveness to current and future customers."

Jasa brings over a decade of experience in the archery industry and developing initiatives to increase customer satisfaction and growth to the role.



C. WALBRECHT

Outtech Sales Services Adds Regional Manager

Outtech Sales Services' newest addition to its

team is regional manager for the independent channel, Cole Walbrecht. Walbrecht will be collaborating with retailers across Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

Before joining Outtech, he worked on the marketing team at Black Diamond Equipment.

Walbrecht studied economics and chemistry at the University of Utah.



P. WOLGEMUTH

Streamlight Inc. Selects European Sales Manager

Streamlight Inc. announced the recent appointment of Pedro Wolgemuth

to the role of international regional sales manager supporting the company's European markets. Wolgemuth is responsible for developing and implementing sales and distribution tactics as well as supporting customer relationships in the company's industrial, automotive and fire/EMS markets across Europe. "Pedro has an extensive background in business development and customer support in the industrial and fire markets throughout Europe," said Michael F. Dineen, Streamlight CRO.

Prior to joining Streamlight, Wolgemuth served as 3M's European business development manager in the Personal Safety Division — Defense & Public Safety.



Youth Shooting Sports Alliance Welcomes Exec. Director

The Youth Shooting Sports Alliance (YSSA) has appointed Kevin Kozel as its new executive director. Kozel has been involved in youth shooting sports programs for over 14 years as a parent, head coach, state director-at-large, advisor and industry sponsor.

“The board couldn’t have found a more passionate leader to take YSSA to new levels and continue its support for youth development programs all across our country,” said outgoing Executive Director Cyndi Flannigan, who announced her retirement earlier this year.

Kozel has enjoyed a successful career in senior and executive leadership roles in the defense contracting industry as well as

ammunition manufacturing, firearms sales and distribution and hunting lodge management.



A. LANGDON

Langdon Tactical Technology Appoints President

Langdon Tactical Technology (LTT) has appointed Aimee Langdon to the position of president. Ernest Langdon will continue his role as CEO as the founder of Langdon Tactical. His focus is steadfast on innovation and product development.

Ernest Langdon stated, “Aimee has strengthened channel partnerships, developed strategic alliances and expanded our national sales presence. Her leadership has been instrumental to our team’s growth and success.”

With almost 20 years of experience in sales, communications and business development within the shooting

and robotics space, she has brought a unique vision to the LTT brand.



J. RING

Iron Valley Supply Co. Advances Director

With a robust background in operations, sales and purchasing, Jacob Ring brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his new role as director of product management at Iron Valley Supply Co.

Prior to his promotion, Ring managed over 5,000 products across 50 product lines, as part of the purchasing department.

Before joining Iron Valley, he served with distinction in the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, also known as “The Old Guard,” at Arlington National Cemetery. **SI**

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BY MASSAD AYOUB

SELLING DEFENSIVE GEAR IN THE FROZEN NORTH

In any retail field, some products are universally desired by the buying public, and some will increase or decrease in popularity depending on regional factors. I was reminded of this recently when teaching in Fairbanks, Alaska.

We've all heard the old saying a really good salesman can "sell refrigerators to Eskimos." Well, this shows the futility of prognosticating about places we haven't been. Any Alaskan could tell you almost all the native people there *do* have refrigerators, just like anyone else.

Wherever I go, I drop in on gun dealers to feel the pulse of what's selling where they are and get their assessment of the mood of their customers with regard to various gun, ammunition and accessory trends. This trip reminded me of the truth some trends are universal from region to region, while some are specific to the locality.

WHAT'S UNIVERSAL

Lots of folks carry guns in Alaska. Geographically the largest state in the

nation, the 49th state is populated by slightly less than 750,000 people. The Alaska State Troopers number just under 400. In the most remote areas, it can take days for law enforcement to respond to violent crime. Alaskans learn to be self-reliant in every respect, including self-defense.

When Vermont had long been the only state where law-abiding citizens could carry concealed in public without a permit, Alaska became the second in 2003, setting off a wave of constitutional carry that now numbers more than half the states. Many Alaskans still apply for the carry permit, if only for reciprocity.

Nationwide, we've all seen the 9mm ride a high wave of popularity, with more than half of all handguns sold being chambered for this cartridge. In Alaska, police and armed citizens alike have gone to it. Alaskan cops were the first to go with open-top pouches for spare magazines instead of the slower-to-access flapped type. (Reloading under stress is fumble-prone enough, particularly with gloves on in a climate often 40 and 50 degrees below zero.)

◀ Chuck Inderrieden, owner of C4 Training Group in Fairbanks, Alaska, with one of the state's most popular targets.

Thirty years ago, Alaska was powerful pistol country for cops. The State Troopers had just switched from S&W Model 686 .357 Magnum revolvers to S&W 4006 pistols in .40 caliber. They found the all-metal frames held the cold and were extremely uncomfortable for shooting in some common weather conditions — a problem they solved by going to the polymer-framed GLOCK 22 in the same caliber. Anchorage Police issued the .45-caliber GLOCK 21.

Throughout the state, very few police were issued 9mm. One reason was hollowpoint service ammo was designed to expand with the dynamic pressure of tissue pressing outward on the walls of the hollow cavity, and when the cavity was plugged by some inert substance (such as thick winter clothing) it failed to expand and turned into ball. The cops wanted, if this happened, for their ammo to turn into *big* ball ammo.



Some trends, like 9mm, are universal. Some, like 'bear guns,' tend to be more regional. The wise seller knows his buyer's needs, and stocks his or her showcases accordingly.

Time went on. The ammunition industry developed barrier-blind bullets as a solution to plugged-slug expansion failure. The Alaska State Troopers recently adopted their first standard issue 9mm, the GLOCK 17 MOS. More northerly Fairbanks has downsized their caliber to 9mm also. The most popular concealed carry guns for armed citizens in Alaska today? You guessed it: 9mm.

But a huge number of handguns

sold in Alaska aren't for street carry or home defense. In a state where outdoor sports are enormously popular, powerful handguns sell virtually as quickly as concealed carry guns. The reason can be found in one word: Bears.

TO RUIN A BRUIN

Salmon fishing is practically the state sport in Alaska. The bears like salmon too, and don't appreciate the competition. Now, when you land in Alaska — whether it's the Anchorage airport or the one in Fairbanks — one of the first things you see are full-body bear mounts. The brawny grizzly, the towering polar bear ... it's as if the state wants to warn you upfront those things are out there.

And it's not just bears. The moose ain't exactly Bullwinkle: Lots of folks have been badly torn up by these large-horned ungulates.

When I visited the indoor range at Alaska Ammo in Fairbanks, I noticed more customers were shooting at the grizzly bear target than any other.

Big, tough animals require big, tough bullets. While one professional guide with a cool head and steady hand managed to kill a charging griz with a 9mm Smith & Wesson, it should be noted that he used a special load — hard-cast for deep penetration — to do it. In the 19th century, large .44- and .45-caliber handguns were preferred for the Alaskan outdoors.

When Douglas Wesson killed big bears and moose with the then-new S&W .357 Magnum in the mid-1930s, he made the caliber disproportionately popular there. And when the .44 Magnum was introduced in the mid-1950s, the double-action Smith & Wesson and the less expensive but still high-quality single-action Ruger Blackhawk and Super Blackhawk became immensely popular. Alaskan "super trooper" Jeff Hall, a leading authority on combat shooting, once said (only half-jokingly) the .44 Magnum Super Blackhawk was the official Alaskan outdoor sidearm.

This changed with the coming of the 10mm cartridge in the 1980s and particularly GLOCK's introduction of the G20 in that caliber in 1990. Instead of five or six chances to stop

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Constantly innovating, the new owner will assume three in-force patents for AR bolt carrier group systems and six trademarks. Two of these patents are for controlling the flow of gas through the bolt carrier group, a key advantage for shooters using suppressors. This proprietary technology and Intellectual property can position the right buyer with significant competitive market advantages.

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the charging bear or moose, the G20 offered 15 deep-penetrating rounds in the magazine and a 16th in the chamber. It was soon followed by other polymer double-stack 10mms from Springfield Armory, S&W and FN.

WHEN "EMERGENCY TOOLS" ARE NEEDED

A decade or so ago in Anchorage, gun dealers told me the title of top-selling handgun there was a tie between the GLOCK 19 for carry in town and the GLOCK 20 for going afield.

At Frontier Outfitters in Fairbanks, I was told the G20 was overwhelmingly the top choice for "four-legged" threats and the GLOCK 9mms, mostly the G19, for the "two-legged" kind, closely followed by the SIG P365 and the Springfield Hellcat. The good people at Alaska Ammo, when I was there to do a book signing, told me it was flatly GLOCK 19 for in-town and GLOCK 20 at the river or in the bush.

This doesn't mean the .44 Magnum is now a relic in the north. They still sell, they're just not as popular as the higher-capacity 10mms for punching through

dense fur, thick hide and heavy bone. One Frontier Outfitters salesman said the Ruger Alaskan double action with the short barrel was their hottest-selling .44 Magnum: it was thought to be more maneuverable if the bear was right on top of you.

The outdoor handgun is largely an emergency tool for when hands are tied up with a fishing rod. Many outdoorsmen prefer a short-barrel shotgun loaded with slugs. Bears and such are a big reason why, when cops in the lower 48 traded their patrol car shotguns for AR-15s, Alaska State Troopers and other lawmen there went with shotgun and AR-15.

The load of choice is almost unanimously the Brenneke Classic because of its accuracy and because its hard, flat-front configuration penetrates very deeply and crushes a great deal of tissue.

Some trends, like 9mm, are universal. Some, like "bear guns," tend to be more regional. The wise seller knows his buyer's needs — and stocks his or her showcases accordingly. **SI**



BY CAROLEE ANITA BOYLES

MAIN LINE ARMORY: BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Many women come to the shooting sports through family connections. For Katie Butler, co-owner of Main Line Armory in Malvern, Pa., her entry came through the military.

“I spent 10 years as an intelligence officer, deployed to Iraq,” she shared. “I carried a firearm during those years but never carried one as a civilian until much later.”

After her time in the military, Butler earned an MBA in marketing from Villanova University. She became a marketing executive for Johnson & Johnson. She still works for J&J full-time in its consumer healthcare business company, Kenvue.

With the start of COVID, life changed for Butler just as it did for all of us. For her, however, it meant a new business.

“We’d always had firearms at home and every once in a while, I’d join my husband on the range,” she said. “But about the time COVID happened, I started seeing girlfriends carrying firearms and looking for training.”

Upon this observation, Butler and her husband Greg started talking about opening a facility to provide the kind of training these women were looking for.

“I would always tell my husband, I love going to the range and I

enjoy shooting, but it’s not the most comfortable experience,” she recalled. “And this is coming from a woman who spent a decade in the military and who is not afraid of firearms. Every time I would go into a range and they had G.I. Joe on the wall, I’d think if they wanted to cater to women, this wasn’t the right approach.”

BUILDING THE BUSINESS

Butler wanted to create a facility she could proudly recommend to a friend and would be very welcoming to women.

“My experience marketing to women really helped me develop Main Line Armory,” she noted.

The Butlers first had the idea to open a range in July of 2020, and finally opened their doors in January of 2023.

“It took us a while to find a location,” Butler said. “We closed on our location and started construction in May 2022.”

The focus of Main Line Armory is the range, but the couple has a retail presence in the Malvern area as well.

“We also have a 4,000 sq. ft. retail facility,” she shared. “About 40% of our revenue is retail related, but most of what we do is offer a range experience. Training is big for us; we took our time finding the right instructors.

◀ Katie Butler (third from right) regularly hosts ladies’ meet and greet events in Main Line Armory’s elegant lounge — and they’re quite effective bringing in first-time guests. Butler estimates more than 50% of her store’s customer base is new to shooting.

Most of them have a law enforcement background and some civilian instruction background. We spent a lot of time making sure we brought in high-caliber instructors who would really be able to cater to new shooters.”

More than 50% of Butler’s customer base is new to shooting.

“Many of them like the design and the layout and the space and tell us they just want to be a part of this,” she lends. “They tell us they’ve never owned or fired a gun, and some of them become members before they purchase their first firearm or take their first class. A lot of people are interested in firearms, and when you build something that entices them to come in and spend time, it makes it easier for them to actually take that step.”



We want women to feel welcome from the moment they step in the door, and we want to take away all the factors that feel like any kind of intimidation.”

Katie Butler • Co-Owner
Main Line Armory, Malvern, Pa.

GROWING THE MARKET

Part of what makes the Main Line Armory experience unique is the way in which they provide an upscale environment for clients.

“We ‘luxurize’ the entire experience,” Butler informed. “We designed it to be a premium range but not in a way that’s too modern. We wanted to make it homey, so it has components of luxury and some older elements. We used a lot of wood throughout the facility to make it more earthy and more welcoming to women.”

Part of the business model at Main Line Armory is to host a lot of events for patrons, such as ladies' meet and greets.

"We usually have about 50 women who come out for these events," Butler shared. "They're free for members and there's a small fee for anyone else who wants to come. There's no shooting at those events; the entire thing is just about getting women introduced. We have a charcuterie, we have wine and the women meet instructors and other women."

They often have one of these events after a training class, so the women who have just finished the class can talk to other women who might be considering taking a class.

"We do a lot of things like this to be sure we're really removing all the barriers," Butler added. "I know from my marketing experience the biggest way to grow is to grow the market. We're not focused on stealing market share from our competitors or competing for customers. We're looking at who are the potential customers not in the firearms industry today and ask why they're not. How can we remove all the barriers keeping them from this industry?"

REACHING UNTAPPED SEGMENTS

When a woman walks into the retail area at Main Line Armory, the first thing she sees is women's bags.

"That's very intentional," Butler confirmed. "We want women to feel welcome from the moment they step in the door, and we want to take away all the factors that feel like any kind of intimidation."

In other words, the Butlers are not just reaching out to women shooters, they are reaching out to women who don't shoot and turning them into shooters.

"Right now, about 40% of our members and customers are women," Butler stated. "But we also have a lot of families. We do a kids-only class. It really helps families feel like having a firearm is something they can safely do."

Despite their focus on women and families, the Butlers don't overlook experienced shooters.

"We have instructors who are

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competitive shooters and who offer more advanced training for people who are more experienced," she said. "About 60% of the services we offer and the content and information we provide are geared toward growing the market and the other 40% is for shooters who are more experienced."



A lot of people are interested in firearms, and when you build something that entices them to come in and spend time, it makes it easier for them to actually take that step."

Katie Butler • Co-Owner
Main Line Armory, Malvern, Pa.

A LOT OF WORK TO DO

Today, Butler takes care of financial matters and marketing for Main Line Armory, while still maintaining her full-time role at Kenvue. Recently, she

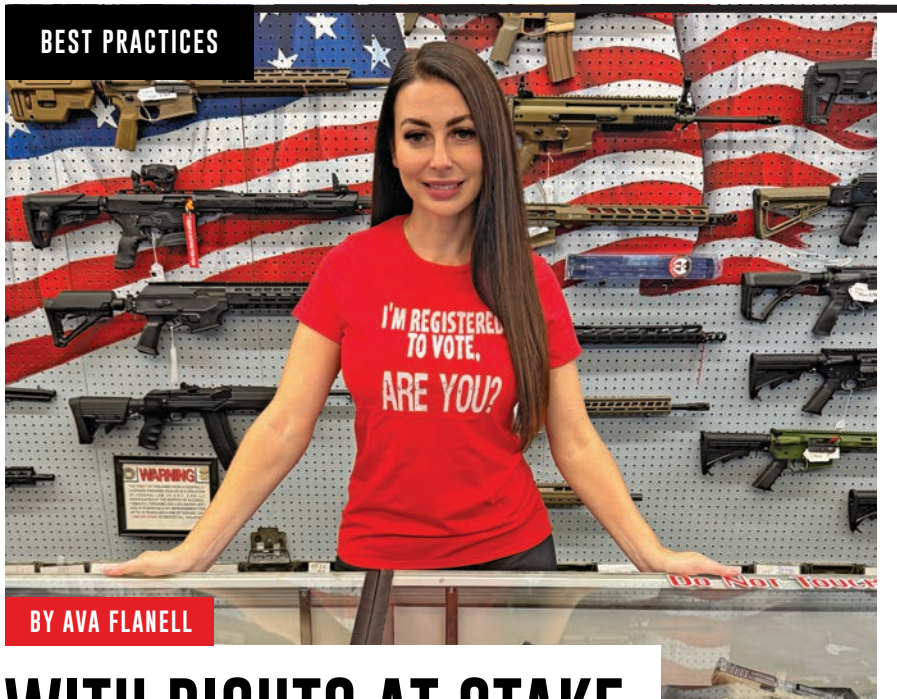
brought her marketing experience into the firearms industry when she presented a seminar at the 2024 NSSF Range-Retailer Business Expo on the power of branding.

Butler acknowledged Main Line Armory still has a lot of room to grow.

"Long term, we would love to open another facility within the Philadelphia region and expand our business," she stated. "Our goal is to take away the stigma associated with guns and shooting — which is what we do with the content we produce on social media and our website. Some Americans have an assumption of what they think a gun owner looks like. The more we can humanize what an *actual* gun owner looks like, the better. We want people to see that a gun owner can be your neighbor, grandparent or another family member. We want people to recognize a lot of people they may not have thought of as gun owners are really gravitating toward it."

Personally, Butler wants to continue to empower women in all aspects of the firearms industry.

"When I look at the industry, I feel like women are an untapped market," she concluded. "This includes products in the market where we're just an afterthought. The more innovation we can see really focused on women, the more women will feel like there's really a place for them here." **SI**



BY AVA FLANELL

WITH RIGHTS AT STAKE, GET INVOLVED

I've never been one for politics. Politics were largely a mystery in how they worked and were (frankly) too dramatic. Plus, with all the negativity, why would anyone want to be part of it?

Generally speaking, we're taught from a young age to avoid politics. The topic alone starts arguments at family gatherings, causes offense among friends and is deliberately divisive in how the media portrays the issues. Avoiding politics has led us to where we are today, though. Politicians pass laws that violate the Constitution and do not reflect the true will of their constituents because we're not involved. We've become disconnected from the process.

Our Founding Fathers intended for *We the People* to participate directly, not only by serving in office but most importantly, by directly communicating with our elected representatives to ensure they follow the will of the people in every decision they make.

IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Before recent events, I, too, followed this misguided tactic of avoiding politics until politicians in my home state of Colorado started to push their extreme anti-gun policies, which only affected the rights of law-abiding citizens.

As more gun laws passed, crime continued to increase. The real aim of these bills is to drive my family's gun store out of business and attempt to take away my constitutionally protected right to defend myself. They made it personal, and I got active and educated very quickly.

As I sat in the Capitol this past legislative session, waiting for my name to be called to testify against one of the 10 anti-gun bills introduced in Colorado, I realized I wouldn't have to be here every few weeks fighting for my rights if Colorado Democrats didn't hold a supermajority in the first place.

If we could flip some of these seats — which is easier to do than most people think — we wouldn't have to keep playing defense. Progressive politicians recognize this and have been successfully targeting swing districts. Bloomberg, Soros and other radical left-wing billionaires have spent a fortune in nearly every state to get politicians elected to local and state governments that support their radical agendas. These states have passed the bulk of anti-gun legislation in the last few years.

Ultimately what they're paying for is marketing to influence your vote. The more votes they can influence, the more they can move the needle and change

◀ Every vote counts. Even if you're in an anti-gun county or state, encourage your employees, customers and vendors to exercise their right and make their voice heard. Complacency and apathy aren't helpful.

local politics. We've seen far too many states fall victim to radical gun bans the past few years due to this strategy.

EVERY VOTE MATTERS

When egregious gun laws are passed, many people blame their governor, but these laws wouldn't even be put on the governor's desk if we stopped them in the state legislature.

How do we do it? This is done through political action — by making sure we elect pro-gun individuals at the state house and state senate level. It means we must vote and encourage others to vote. Apathetic voters, especially the millions of gun owners and hunters who aren't even voting, must be encouraged to step up and vote for our rights.

Many Americans have, unfortunately, given up on voting because they believe it's rigged or they don't like either side. Truthfully, I can't write this article without wearing a tin foil hat, but I have to ask, is it easier to turn a blind eye on your state and country than to take a few minutes out of your day and vote?

Do not surrender what many countries do not have. Imagine if your vote was the deciding factor. In many cases, it's incredible how close some of these races really are and the power a single vote has. Just a few voters can change the makeup of state legislatures.

A great example recently took place during the Colorado Republican Primary Election earlier this year, which determines the Republican candidates who will be on the November ballot. In Colorado House District 58, which encompasses the Durango area, Larry Suckla won by just three votes. If only four more people had voted, it could have fundamentally changed the outcome of this election.

In 2022, in House District 50, Democrat Mary Young defeated Republican Ryan Gonzalez by only 330 votes.

These are just two examples, but there are many swing districts nationwide capable of easily flipping one way or another. Swing districts hold the key to the future of our rights, especially our gun rights — depending on who wins.

COMPLACENCY HAS CONSEQUENCES

Just as local and state politicians have the biggest impact on our lives, these local elections are where we, the voter, can have just as big of an impact. We must be willing to do our part and get involved. It's also important to note if you don't live in a swing district, it's still imperative to vote. As gun owners, we know complacency has consequences.

Voting is a big responsibility, one that can often feel overwhelming, especially if you don't have time to research everything. Something many voters aren't aware of is they don't have to vote for everything on the ballot. A common misconception when voting is if you leave anything blank, your ballot will be disqualified. This is simply not true. You can leave races or questions blank if you feel you cannot cast your vote in good conscience, but do make sure you vote where you can.

Make sure you vote for ballot initiatives that will have an impact locally and are often very important. In Colorado this November, a ballot



Apathetic voters, especially the millions of gun owners and hunters who aren't even voting, must be encouraged to step up and help vote for our rights.

initiative will ask citizens to approve a new 6% excise tax on firearms, firearm parts and ammo. It sounds like a no-brainer to vote No, but the proceeds from this tax are going to victims of domestic violence and it will be phrased in a way that makes it sound inexcusable to vote no.

There will also be another misleading ballot question to prohibit "trophy hunting," which isn't about trophy hunting at all and will adversely affect the ecosystem as predators won't be kept in balance as a result.

Unfortunately, unless voters do outside research, they aren't given all of the information to make an intelligent decision. It's worth taking the time to understand the initiative to determine what impact it will have on your life.

MAKE AN IMPACT

As November approaches, we need to take a play out of the gun grabbers' playbook and start extracting these local politicians with a scalpel. But we can't do it without everyone's help. We need people to put their skepticism aside and vote. Then, I'd like you to take it a step further. Take one person who you know never votes to the polls with you. If we all take a friend or two, we can make a larger impact. Let's flip some seats!

If you or your employees aren't registered to vote, a great resource is vote4america.org. **SI**

Editor's Note: Another resource is NSSF's GUNVOTE.org. For more info, see this month's *Industry Link* column on p. 50.

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BY TIM BARKER

THE HANDGUN SEGMENT

ECONOMY SLOWS DEMAND, BUT STOCKING OPTIONS AROUND

Coming out of the chaos caused by the COVID pandemic and social unrest, it's not surprising handgun sales have slowed. When you combine a relatively calm period with economic uncertainty, there's just not as much incentive for customers to buy more of what they already have.

Will this still be true in November and beyond?

We find ourselves once again facing the potential for unrest and upheaval as we head into the nation's next election — a trigger for the kind of news that can spook current and would-be customers. But is it possible we've reached a point

where politics and breaking news have lost the seismic power to shift the handgun market?

It's not out of the question, suggests Patrick Hayden, owner of Kentucky Gun Company, in Bardstown, Ky. Like the rest of us, he has no crystal ball offering definitive answers. But after watching the turmoil of recent years, he's starting to wonder if customers are growing immune.

"That's not to say we can't have another weird and unexpected event like COVID or World War III," Hayden asserted, "but normal panic buying due to the normal news cycle doesn't come into play anymore."

At Wyoming Guns in Homosassa, Fla., owner Jay Castaline doesn't disagree. Immediately after the attempted assassination of Donald Trump in July, Castaline took calls from several distributors urging him to stock up for what they suggested would be a new round of panic buying. He was unmoved.

"I told them we have enough inventory. I don't need any more ammo and I don't foresee people rushing out to buy a gun," Castaline said. "I think the people who want guns have guns."

Dave Larsen, owner of Doug's Shoot'n Sports in Salt Lake City, isn't ready to dismiss the idea of future market volatility. Instead, he thinks it's more likely to be in hibernation for a half-dozen years or so — until today's youngsters are old enough to create a new customer base.

With this in mind, he's taking a cautious approach with inventory.

"I don't plan on stocking up because I'm pretty heavy right now," Larsen shared. "With the economy the way it is, people are still a little skittish with their finances. So, I don't see a huge rush coming this fall."

WHAT CUSTOMERS WANT

Talking about the handgun market can feel somewhat repetitive. At stores across the nation, the top sellers tend to be the same. There aren't many surprises to be found while listening to Castaline, in Florida, tick through his list of best sellers.

"The top gun, and it doesn't matter what model it is, is the SIG P365. It's just dominating the market," he confirmed, before rattling off other favorite models by GLOCK, Ruger and Smith & Wesson.

Still, not every customer wants to walk out the door with the same gun everyone else has.

At Wyoming Guns, there's growing interest in Canik — sales increased significantly during the first half of the year — and a rather unlikely carry gun: the Ruger LCP II in .22.

The latter sales are driven by the fact his shop is located within a community of a lot of retirees.

"They're not looking for something that's going to hurt their hands," he explained. "They want something they can carry and can go out and shoot."

In Kentucky, Hayden has seen fresh interest in .380 handguns, including the Ruger LCP MAX and the new Smith & Wesson BODYGUARD 2.0.

"I don't want to say they're having a resurgence, but there's definitely an uptick in the sales on those," said Hayden, who sees no reason to think they'll replace the ultra-popular 9mm subcompacts. "Sometimes the platform is still just a little too big for concealed carry. Some people want a pocket gun or micro compact."

Getting customers excited can be a bit of a challenge, particularly at a time when some manufacturers keep coming out with slight variations on

existing models. But even some of these reworked or rebooted models have the potential to bring in customers.

Among the recent entrants attracting attention are the SIG SAUER P365-FUSE, Smith & Wesson's



I think it is kind of dialing people back a little bit. I mean, back in 2022, everybody was putting a new gun in their gas tank every two months. There has been a little bit of a slowdown and people are being a little more conservative."

Dave Larsen • Owner
Doug's Shoot'n Sports • Salt Lake City

M&P Carry Comp and the previously mentioned rework of the BODYGUARD.

Larsen, in Utah, likes what he's been seeing, particularly with new metal frames, slide cuts, aggressive grip texture, better triggers and other extras.

"It's a little more of a trend toward fancier or sexier guns," he remarked. "The consumers are really going for that. They see the extra refinement. It's like buying the car with leather seats and navigation."

THE PATH LESS TRAVELED

Gun stores would be boring places if they offered only a sea of top-selling handguns made by the top manufacturers. Those guns may represent the vast majority of your handgun sales, but there are always customers looking for something a little different. Figuring out which of those alternate brands and models to carry is the challenge.

Consider the Daniel Defense H9, a gun that drew strong interest following its initial release. Larsen has one on his range rental wall but says customer interest has cooled a bit.

"It gets a little bit of attention and I still have them on backorder. They're definitely difficult to get," he informed, "but people aren't coming in asking for them right now."

This is often the problem with the offerings by lesser-known handgun manufacturers, including some of the guns coming out of Turkey.

"A lot of those are great guns and a great value, but they're tough to sell because people don't know what they are," Larsen said.

It doesn't have to be a death knell for alternative manufacturers, suggests Castaline in Florida.

Though many customers are brand-sensitive, there are those who are willing to go in a different direction if they feel the value is there. This has worked for his Florida store, where makers like Tisas and Girsan have found willing buyers.

"You've got some brand guys and you're never going to change them," he asserted. "But you have guys who are



Kentucky Gun Company's Patrick Hayden goes over the selling points of a snub-nosed revolver with a customer. He contends current events are having less and less impact on the market: "Normal panic buying due to the normal news cycle doesn't come into play anymore." This echoes the "crisis fatigue" movement called out by dealers earlier this year in *SI*. Dealers, have you noticed the same? Join the discussion: comments@shootingindustry.com



Jay Castaline of Wyoming Guns has noted the high-end side of the handgun market — those priced in the \$2,000–\$5,000 range from the likes of Nighthawk Custom, Ed Brown and more — have outperformed all other categories this year at his store.

just looking for value. You put two guns in their hands and they'll ask why they should pay \$900 for one when they can pay \$500 for the other when they feel just the same."

In Kentucky, Hayden has witnessed a strong uptick in sales of Staccato's 2011s, something many other stores have also experienced. In general, though, there has been growing demand for budget-friendly double-stack 1911s, like Live Free Armory's Apollo 11.

"Every manufacturer has a different name for

it, but these double-stack 1911s have been pretty popular during the first half of the year now that there's a handful of players in the sub-\$1,000 price point," he reasoned.

Although revolver sales have been flat for most makes and models, Hayden does expect a slight surge from a pair of new Smith & Wesson J-Frames (one in .38 Special and one in .32 H&R Magnum) offered through Lipsey's with upgraded grips and sights.

"There's been a high demand for those things," he said. "They're just now

kind of starting to hit the market and they're still extremely limited."

HIGHER-END SALES

Handgun sales, in general, may be lackluster, but Hayden is seeing stronger performance from the higher end of the market. Of course, "high end" is a term where the definition varies from store to store.



You've got some brand guys and you're never going to change them. But you have guys who are just looking for value. You put two guns in their hands and they'll ask why they should pay \$900 for one when they can pay \$500 for the other when they feel just the same."

Jay Castaline • Owner
Wyoming Guns • Homosassa, Fla.

At Kentucky Gun, it means firearms in the \$2,000 to \$5,000 range, from

companies like Nighthawk Custom, Ed Brown, OA Defense and Staccato.

Exactly why this segment has outperformed all others this year is something of a mystery.

"It may be the buyers in that price point are not affected by the cost of living out there today," he proposed. "They just have more disposable income and they're still spending."

It's a similar story in Florida, where Castaline has seen a surge in customer interest in pricier guns by CZ and Wilson Combat: "Four years ago, I sold maybe 10 Wilson Combats. Now I'm selling 40."

He attributes the sales increase to Wilson's ability to put out quality guns in the \$2,500 to \$3,000 range.

"They're not going back to the factory with issues of feeding and everything else," he continued. "I think Wilson did their homework; I think they did a good job building it, they did a good job marketing it."

A reminder that sales in one store are no guarantee of a similar trend elsewhere, Utah's Larsen hasn't seen the same surge, with his Nighthawks, Wilsons and Staccatos sticking around on shelves a little longer.

He sees the economy as the culprit.

"I think it is kind of dialing people back a little bit. I mean, back in 2022, everybody was putting a new gun in their gas tank every two months," Larsen said. "There has been a little bit of a slowdown and people are being a little more conservative." **SI**

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BY BRYAN HENDRICKS

FULL-SERVICE GUN SHOPS GAIN EDGE OVER COMPETITORS

You're considering hiring a gunsmith to perform an increasing number of service requests, but is a gunsmith really a worthwhile investment for your business?

Any new hire is a value judgment, but a gunsmith is a highly specialized

position. If utilized strategically, it won't take long before a gunsmith begins helping you achieve your short-term and long-term business goals.

THE LIFETIME VALUE OF A CUSTOMER IS ... ?

Gene Kelly, founder and president of the American Gunsmithing Institute in Napa, Calif., has trained thousands of gunsmiths with his unique online courses. He contends hiring a gunsmith is a long-game move capable of generating immediate profits while enhancing the long-term value of your brand. It's a visionary step that can distinguish a full-service

firearms retailer from a mere seller of guns and accessories.

"It builds relationships and 'stickiness,'" Kelly said. "It makes you different than the firearms store down the street that might sell guns 5% cheaper than you do."

The added value of reputation creates customer loyalty and helps ensure customer retention, which can be passed down through generations of customers, according to Kelly.

"One thing you have to ask yourself is what is the lifetime value of a customer?" he suggested. "It's something most people in our industry don't think

about, but people in other industries do. If you have a qualified gunsmith — not a hack or a parts swapper — who's dedicated to doing a good job, it builds your reputation. People who ordinarily wouldn't go into your shop would be referred by friends. "They did my cleaning and they did a good job. They offered me a sight upgrade, which I did. It was reasonable and I'm happy." So again, what is the lifetime value of a customer?"

This is rosy, but will your gunsmith generate enough additional income to justify his position?

"If you have 100 customers who spend \$1,000 with you (because of your gunsmith), there's your \$100,000 in labor," Kelly pointed out. "It's not a lot of money for people to spend customizing or repairing their guns because most of our customers have more than

◀ Not a job for green enthusiasts, this image depicts lapping being done on an AR-15 build gone wrong. (Image: Frank Jardim, from "AR Build Fixes" in *American Handgunner DIY 2023 Special Edition*)

one gun. Again, it goes back to: what is the lifetime value of a customer?"

FULL-SERVICE BENEFIT

Kevin Poley, owner of Crossfire Gunsmith & Firearms in Lexington, S.C., has distinguished his business as a premier firearms resource in South Carolina's Midlands region. His experience illustrates Kelly's compounding asset theory.

"A common thing here is when someone is looking around and sees a red dot that can go on a pistol," Poley said. "Then they'll ask, 'Can you cut slides?' Absolutely! They can buy a red dot, and then we can actually mill their slide. I get paid to sell the red dot and to install it."

Poley said his reputation is such that the Lexington, S.C., police department contracted with him to install red dots on 62 service weapons.

"After milling it, you've got to protect the metal, so we Cerakoted all those firearms, too," Poley shared, praising his Cerakote specialist, Chris Trulock.

It's just one example of the full range of gunsmith services Poley offers to a broad, diverse range of customers.

"We're pretty much an all-around gunsmith gun store," he noted. "We do everything, from repairing and restoring your gun

to tracking down any gun you're looking for. We're actually a gun store and machine shop, a complete go-to store."

Importantly, a gunsmith knows the legal limitations of what he can and cannot do to a gun. For example, a gunsmith or a retailer cannot build a firearm for a customer if the business does not have a manufacturer's license. This knowledge will keep a business out of serious legal trouble by refusing to build a gun for a customer who brings in the components to do so.

BECAUSE PEOPLE OFTEN TAKE GUNS TO A GUNSMITH AS A LAST RESORT AFTER HOPELESSLY BOTCHING A GARAGE REPAIR JOB, THIS CONTACT OFTEN LEADS TO OTHER RETAIL ACTIVITY.

An experienced gunsmith also knows arcane regulations a hobbyist working the counter would not know.

"A guy brought me a gun with U.S. markings on it. It's a shotgun that came off the [decommissioned aircraft carrier] *USS Intrepid*," Poley recalled. "The owner thought it was a Marine security detail shotgun. He wanted me to alter it and

put a scope on it. I said, 'No, I can't do that. I can clean it for you, but I can't modify it because it's still property of the U.S. government. If you alter it, you're going to jail.'"

Poley said cleanings are a bread-and-butter service. And because people often take guns to a gunsmith as a last resort after hopelessly botching a garage repair job, this contact often leads to other retail activity.

"We actually have a good customer base," he said. "They bring stuff in. We fix it. It's great. But then he's got this other gun he wants to bring in. Customers come in multiple times bringing us guns they don't shoot because they

don't work anymore."

This generates a lot of five-star reviews online. Poley said it's very important because of his aggressive online presence.

"It's important to us to have a good review," he confirmed. "When people are searching for a gunsmith, we pop up at the top of the list for our area. When we get a negative review, I'm calling the guy and asking what happened. One guy came in. We cleaned it and got it in working order. When we gave it back to him, he told us, 'This isn't my gun; it's too nice to be my gun.' Reputation is everything in this business."



Broken-off screws pose a significant challenge — even for seasoned gunsmiths. But professionals know a few tricks to remove them successfully. Otis Technology has a Gunsmithing Pick Set that's proven a useful tool for smiths. (Image: Frank Jardim, from "Patience & Prayer" in *American Handgunner DIY 2023 Special Edition*)

A "LITTLE GRAY" IS OKAY

Mandi Sano, president of The Gun Doctor in Roselle, Ill., occupies a unique niche as a full-service firearms business in the most hostile region of one of the most hostile gun states. Sano's father established the Gun Doctor in 1972, and he grew the business into a generational powerhouse. Experience fuels the engine.

"It's like with a pilot: you want to see a little gray hair on your gunsmith," Sano said, laughing.

While gunsmithing can and often does translate to additional sales, Sano believes a gunsmith must be mindful of propriety. A complicated gun repair can be stressful to a customer. Suggesting other products at the time could rub a customer wrong.

"You have to be cautious when working on guns because if you have to order parts, it's also a secondary sale," she explained. "I want to be kind of cautious our gunsmithing department doesn't push add-on sales too hard. The gunsmith is here to service guns. If you have an inexperienced staff, I could see how it could turn into 'Buy this, this and this.'"

Sano's position is also unique because the sale of AR-15 rifles is prohibited in Illinois. This removes a very popular firearm from Sano's retail repertoire, and also from its service repertoire.

"We're sitting under an assault weapons ban," she said. "Before 2023, we worked on a ton of ARs. Now we can't work on any of them."

Besides gray hair, Sano

looks for other attributes in a gunsmith. She wants to see how he works.

"I want to see how clean their bench is, but what I look for is the opposite of what you think," she began. "I see ads for people building custom 1911s. Their benches are pristine, no tools out. I look at that and see it as a marketing video. I want to see a guy who works. I want to see bench tools on it. I want to see a bench with some use."

"I WANT TO BE KIND OF CAUTIOUS OUR GUNSMITHING DEPARTMENT DOESN'T PUSH ADD-ON SALES TOO HARD. THE GUNSMITH IS HERE TO SERVICE GUNS."

Mandi Sano - President
The Gun Doctor
Roselle, Ill.

THE WALL OF ECONOMICS

Jim Jones, owner of J&L Gunsmithing in Chesapeake, Va., would earn Sano's approval.

"I have so much equipment in my shop," he said. "I have two mills. I have two lathes, a surface grinder, a belt sander, a TIG welder, a MIG welder, a bandsaw and the list goes on and on."

Chesapeake is near



A trigger bar on an ATI MP40 being filed. These types of modifications can lead to additional guns coming in to your store for work — generating profits. (Image: Frank Jardim, from "Improving The ATI MP40P" in *American Handgunner DIY 2022 Special Edition*)

the Norfolk Naval Base, one of the world's largest military facilities. Jones suggests many sailors leave the service without having learned any practical skills to apply to a career. Many think they want to become gunsmiths, Jones said, but there's a lot to learn on the road to proficiency.

"I'm cutting pieces of metal in my shop," he emphasized. "I'm confident, but I can't look up every slide or whatever to see what kind of metal it is. I estimate the speed it should be on the cutter. I can do it in 20 seconds. I turn it to that speed and start to cut, but I have experience to know if it doesn't sound right to me, I need to tune it

up so the chips coming off are perfect."

This is where a retailer runs into the wall of economics. A person with that degree of experience probably owns his own shop, as do Jones, Sano and Poley. A gun store owner probably can't afford this kind of experience, but he also can't afford inexperience.

To take his business where he wants it to go, he must decide if he really can afford a gunsmith or not. Maybe he should job out his gunsmith work and hire an armorer instead.

We'll answer that question in the final installment of this series next month. **SI**

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BY PETER SUCIU

DEFENSE OF A DIFFERENT KIND



TODAY'S CONSUMERS ARE AS LIKELY TO BROWSE ON THEIR MOBILE DEVICES AS THEY ARE TO WALK THE AISLES OF A BRICK-AND-MORTAR RETAILER. THE INTERNET ISN'T A FAD, AND TOMORROW'S CONSUMERS AREN'T LIKELY TO EVEN KNOW ABOUT THE "YELLOW PAGES."

Yet, being online is also more than just posting a website with directions and store hours. This is true of retailers who aren't offering online sales. Simply being online today is expected, and it's where first impressions can be made.

"We believe our online presence is very important. Not only for advertising and letting people know what types of things we have available, but also for just interacting with our customers," explained Jeremy

Ball, president and owner of Sharp Shooting Indoor Range & Gun Shop in Spokane, Wash.

As Ball told *Shooting Industry*, too many retailers — and not just in the shooting industry — may collapse because they don't take their online presence seriously enough.

"Where they fail is by not interacting with their customers," he added. "They fail to respond to comments, suggestions and questions. This happens for a lot of

reasons but if you're posting online content, you should be responding to comments, concerns and anything else brought up by your followers as quickly as possible. Yes, it takes a ton of work, but you'll see the results and have customers comment to you about it immediately."

Even for shops that don't have an e-commerce business, it's important to maintain a reasonable site to draw in foot traffic.

"Although our primary focus is not on an online store, it provides several key benefits. It allows our customers to browse our product offerings, understand what we have in stock and send us inquiries," noted Alex Hague, co-owner of VRA Range, which operates a location in Ohio and another in Indiana. "Our commitment to customer service is enhanced through this

platform, enabling us to engage with and assist our customers more effectively.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF ONLINE SECURITY

Firearms retailers are already expected to be well-versed in ensuring the merchandise is properly secured, while cameras and alarms provide an additional layer of protection.

However, in the digital age, it doesn't go nearly far enough. All retailers who maintain any customer, client, vendor, employee or other data related to the business on a computer need to ensure all this information is protected and secured.

“If you are in any business, you want to protect your customer's information,” said technology industry analyst Rob Enderle of the Enderle Group. “Customers won't trust or use you if they find you didn't protect their data, and you could be liable for any damage done to them because of this data theft.”

Moreover, retailers today produce more and more data daily, and while much of it may seem mundane it isn't often the case.

“Bad actors can use a lot of seemingly worthless data to perform social engineering attacks with a much better success rate,” suggested Erich Kron, security awareness advocate at cybersecurity training provider

KnowBe4. “For example, if a cybercriminal knows a customer placed an order from a company, they could easily call and claim to be from said company with a follow-up question or pretend to have a special deal. By citing previous order details, they can convince the target they're representing the organization.”

In June, KnowBe4 entered into an agreement with NSSF to enhance security awareness efforts and bolster the overall security culture of its member organizations. KnowBe4 is helping educate the industry about the importance of data, and why it needs to be protected as much as the actual firearms in a shop.

“No organization is too small to be a target, and no industry is immune to attacks. Every company out there has information about customers, vendors, and employees,” Kron told *Shooting Industry*. “Organizations also need to be aware of places where data may be stored that they are not considering. It is not uncommon to find someone is using a spreadsheet program to pull information from a database for further processing. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as it can improve efficiency and make the job easier.

“However, it's important organizations understand all the non-

traditional places where data may be stored, so it can be properly protected.”

Access to information should be limited. Movies and TV may suggest hackers use advanced software to breach a computer or network, but oftentimes, it's the social engineering described by Kron that poses the greater danger. This is where someone is tricked into providing a password or other information — and all too often humans remain the weakest link.



AS SIMPLE AS IT SOUNDS, IF THE DATA ISN'T THERE, IT CAN'T BE USED AGAINST YOU OR YOUR CUSTOMERS. FOR THE FIREARMS INDUSTRY, HOWEVER, THERE IS A LOT OF INFORMATION THAT NEEDS TO BE MAINTAINED. AND IT NEEDS TO BE SECURED LIKE A FIREARM.

“You should be making sure you're limiting access to that information and updating passwords and security settings

regularly,” advised Ball in Washington. “At the end of the day, you don't want to be the one found to have negligently handled the personal information of your customers. If it doesn't affect you financially, then it will in how they perceive your store.”

In addition, cybersecurity experts suggest the best way to secure data is to delete it once it is no longer needed. All too often, organizations retain far more data than they need to, and it has caused significant issues when a data breach occurs. As simple as it sounds, if the data isn't there, it can't be used against you or your customers. For the firearms industry, however, there is a lot of information that needs to be maintained. And it needs to be secured like a firearm.

“Wherever possible, data should be encrypted when not being used,” noted Kron. “Many modern software packages allow for encrypting data, including the most popular spreadsheets and other office-type products. By encrypting data, it makes anything the attackers may steal useless and protects it from being leaked.”

AN ALPHABET OF REGULATIONS

The gun world is already full of acronyms and industry-specific terms, but those on the retail side of things should plan to add a



VRA's Alex Hague shared his store has two top priorities while serving its online customers: to protect their data and respect their privacy.

few more related to e-commerce and security. This includes a literal alphabet of regulations. Even those who don't conduct online sales should still be familiar with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) 4.0, a set of rules and guidelines designed to help organizations that handle credit card information.

"Any merchant should ensure they are at least PCI-DSS compliant, which ensures a minimum standard of secure storage of customer

information collected during a sale as well as standards for protecting systems and networks from a cyber-attack," said Ross Biddle, NSSF chief information officer. "Smaller merchants may want to engage outsourced vendors and cloud-based systems able to offer more security and protection and less maintenance and upkeep. This is an area that makes sense to modernize and spend appropriately on and shop owners should look to leverage expertise

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likely not found in-house.”

Likewise, there are now privacy concerns in place in some states, notably the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).

“This is another area where it makes sense to engage with a third party that has expertise in compliance across all of the states where sales may occur and can stay abreast of the constantly evolving compliance and security landscape,” Biddle suggested.



“AT THE END OF THE DAY, YOU DON'T WANT TO BE THE ONE FOUND TO HAVE NEGLIGENTLY HANDLED THE PERSONAL INFORMATION OF YOUR CUSTOMERS. IF IT DOESN'T AFFECT YOU FINANCIALLY, THEN IT WILL IN HOW THEY PERCEIVE YOUR STORE.”

Jeremy Ball • Owner
Sharp Shooting Indoor Range
& Gun Shop
Spokane, Wash.

“When operating online, we must comply with various data protection laws,” added Hague. “We need to ensure our website and online systems are secure, using encryption and other security protocols to protect transactions and personal data. Protecting customer data and respecting user privacy are top priorities for us.” **SI**

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UNLOCK HIDDEN PROFITS

BY MASSAD AYOOB

HOW TRAINING CAN BOOST YOUR GUN SHOP'S BOTTOM LINE

Whether or not you have a range on premises, a “training income stream” is within reach at your shop. Even in the many states where constitutional carry has cut the once-mandatory concealed carry training, the smart gun shop owner or manager can add a training income stream or enhance one that already exists. Let us count the ways.

TRAINING EXCELLENCE

The shop with a range already can bring in those who want to learn the gun — or learn it better —

along with those customers who already understand shooting and just want a place to do it. A good example is PAC Range in Mandeville, La.

PAC opened just recently, in July 2024. Owners Leslie and James Peters were shooters who didn't care to shoot outdoors year-round in Louisiana. (The temperature was 98 degrees ambient on the day *SI* visited, with a 112-degree heat factor.) They found many indoor ranges lacking in one way or another. Accordingly, they spent an estimated \$4 million to build an indoor facility. It is state of the art in every way, including a plush members' lounge, a splendid (and splendidly stocked) retail sales floor ... and a classroom.

Christian Paille was hired as general manager, not only for his past-proven

ability to run ranges but also for his ability to teach and supervise firearms-related classes. He assembled an excellent, highly capable roster of trainers. Paille's standard to be accepted in the teaching cadre consists of two traits: trainers not only had to be good at imparting knowledge but also proficient shooters.

In Paille's office are two pieces of paper on a wallboard. When Hannah Long, the highly accomplished daughter of ace firearms instructor Bill Long, applied for a job, Paille took her out on the range after the interview. One of those pieces of paper was hung downrange at 5 yards, and Paille used his own carry pistol to fire five shots into a tiny one-hole group the size of a single .45 bullet hole. The other piece of paper was hung for Ms. Long, who proceeded

to draw her own carry gun and fire a one-hole group only a fraction of an inch larger. She was hired on the spot and has earned an excellent reputation as a trainer for PAC.

MORE THAN JUST TUITION

PAC is a young business, but Paille notes the training input is on track to add 20% to 25% to the company's profits.

It's not just the tuition. For customers who just come to shoot, not to take classes, one high-tech range bay goes for \$30 per hour. But the average customer spends \$60 to \$100 per session. Perhaps they enjoy the range so much they're delighted to stay longer than planned, and it might be that they buy more ammunition accordingly.

Likewise, on the training side, those who come to be students tend to spend more than the tuition.

Paille told *SI*, “They often buy their training ammo from us. Before they leave, they might buy some carry loads the instructor recommended. A lot of beginning students will come with suboptimal guns, suboptimal holsters and suboptimal belts. We have much better equipment we can rent to them, which they realize as soon as they use it. They buy those things, or similar guns and gear from us before they leave or shortly thereafter.”

NO RANGE? NO PROBLEM.

If you have a room and it can be turned into a classroom, so much the better. If not, you may be able to rent a gun club with, say, an outdoor range and a clubhouse that will serve nicely as a classroom.

Every year, I teach at the Harrisburg (Pa.) Hunters' and Anglers' Association. We use the indoor range for dry-fire, the indoor archery range as a dojo for hand-to-hand self-defense elements, the outdoor ranges for live-fire and the meeting area as a classroom.

It is profitable for both the visiting instructor and the club. There's room for the gun shop managing the student recruiting and registration to make a fair share from such an undertaking, too.

If you have a classroom but not a range, most instructors need some lecture time and the classroom will do nicely for this. If you offer a class that garners more students than the classroom can hold, it may be worth it to rent a local hotel conference room for the purpose. It will often be less expensive to rent a VFW hall or something similar.

Many instructors have lecture-only programs — no range required. One of our finest instructors

on the “thinking side” of armed self-defense is John Hearne, who has only recently retired from a distinguished career in federal law enforcement and whose lectures are a well-attended staple every year at Tom Givens' famous Rangemaster Tactical Conference in Dallas.

Of course, you can often find NRA instructors locally and save travel expenses for basic classes through the NRA.

ANCILLARY SALES

With outside trainers, make sure beforehand what the deal is on who gets paid what. The better-known instructors realize your time and efforts in letting your customers know about the class, etc., are valuable and you should share in the profits. But there are more profits available.

Remember Christian Paille's comments above about students who find during the class that they need or at least want better guns, gear and ammo? Find out from the visiting

“name” instructor what guns, ammo, holsters, books, etc., they're going to be recommending for their students, *and have said product(s) in stock when the class rolls around.*

In one city where I teach every year, the classroom program is taught at a local church and the live-fire at a separate private range. However, there is a gun

“A lot of beginning students will come with suboptimal guns, suboptimal holsters and suboptimal belts. We have much better equipment we can rent to them, which they realize as soon as they use it.”

Christian Paille
General Manager
PAC Range • Mandeville, La.

shop that has been very helpful in advertising our classes, and keeps “the best stuff” in stock a lot of shops don't have. We have been known to arrange after-class caravans of students to the shop, and it has been quite worthwhile to have someone working there late after class when 20 or 30 new customers come in to buy the stuff the instructors have recommended they can't find at the shops back home.

Back in the day I taught through Lethal Force Institute, which was affiliated with two other corporations, Armor of New Hampshire and Police Bookshelf. All were headquartered in the same facility. There would be one evening after class when we would give the students the option of coming over; almost all took us up on it.

They could find the books they'd been reading about in the gun magazines, the high-performance ammo their own local gun store didn't stock, top-quality concealed carry gunleather and even get fitted for body armor and wear it out the door. (All students, of course, had been vetted and we had copies of their concealed carry permits, etc.)

One top-quality firm that will wholesale body armor and not limit you to selling only to police and military is WarBird (warbirdpro.com). A typical hour or two after the class resulted in several thousand dollars in sales.

So, you see, training can increase a gun retailer's income stream even if they don't have their own live-fire range. **BI**



Christian Paille, right, with a sales associate behind the counter at PAC Range. According to Paille, training is on track to add 20% to 25% to the fledgling company's profits.



The “Rigby Rookie”

BY JAY PINSKY

John Rigby & Co. is more than just a fine rifle builder — to many

sportsmen and women, it's the epitome of old-school craftsmanship.

How old? According to John Rigby & Co., the Dublin, Ireland-born turned London, England transplant (1865) gun builder is the “oldest gunmaking firm in continuous existence in the English-speaking world.”

These days, they don't

build Rigby's like they used to, though. They make them better, and folks like Slade Stevens are a big reason why.

Thus, it shouldn't have surprised me when I stopped in John Rigby & Co.'s booth at the Dallas Safari Club last year and met the 20-something-year-old.

The tall, soft-spoken and ultra well-mannered young man told me all I wanted to know about the 9.3x62mm Mauser I held. He did so with the passion, wisdom and respect you'd expect from a legendary Rigby rifle gunsmith.

Slade knew every detail of the rifle so well you'd think he built it.

He did. Well, sort of.

Rigby builds their rifles with teams of gunsmiths.

“Typically, we have between 15 to 20 gunsmiths,” informed Marc Newton, managing director of Rigby. “One of Rigby's real strengths is our very youthful team. They're very progressive, outward-looking and ready to try new things. At Rigby, we ensure all our team members have various skills so they're not single-focused and can apply themselves to other tasks. This means we can be much more reactive as a team to get orders out.”

METICULOUS TRAINING & BUILDING

Rigby is so dedicated to finding and building

gunsmiths the old-school way, they created their own new school in 2022. Known as Rigby Academy and run by Thomas Le Jendre (who is also a Rigby gunmaker), it's self-described as "a dedicated gunmakers' apprenticeship program designed to preserve the traditional skills and methods used in gunmaking. The five-year apprenticeship mentors the next generation of craftsmen in the art of gunmaking, ensuring the continuity of these time-honored skills for future generations. Upon completion, successful graduates earn a Rigby gunmakers' certificate and an opportunity to apply for a permanent

position within the company."

Why? Because John Rigby & Co. wants to build their gunsmiths the same way they build their rifles — meticulously.

"The process is designed to extract the best mechanical and artisanal skills, with a thorough market understanding. Our aim is not only to cultivate excellence in gun-making to become a great gunmaker but also to foster a deep appreciation for the evolving needs of the gun trade industry," said Nelson Neto, Jr., head of production for Big Game and Highland Stalker rifles.

According to Neto, the training begins with

hands-on experience in fundamental tasks such as filing and polishing and knowledge of gun mechanics. Apprentices then progress to mastering wood finishing, then assembling and finishing a complete rifle.

"Each step of this journey is carefully guided and evaluated," he noted. "At the end of the training, apprentices present their work to an examination board for a thorough assessment. Upon successful approval, apprentices are then awarded their gunmakers' certificate."

EMPHASIS ON YOUTH BY DESIGN

Slade is one of a few rookies at Rigby, which is by design according to Newton.

"I love it," Newton said. "I was 25 when I started Rigby, but I couldn't get anyone older and super experienced to come and join me because I was a 25-year-old kid running what was basically a start-up with an old name, so it was only other youngsters who would give it a chance. I'm a massive believer in giving young people those same opportunities afforded to me."

Not everyone can be a Rigby gunsmith. Nearly 100 apply annually, according to Le Jendre. A fact that makes Slade's job at Rigby, even as a rookie, remarkable because it's his first job as a gun builder — ever.

"I've always been interested in guns and



Slade Stevens is part of a new wave of gunsmiths at John Rigby & Co. An intentional focus on youth is driving the company forward, according to Managing Director Marc Newton.

“
*‘Old school’ at
John Rigby
& Co. isn’t
about
connecting to
the past.
It’s the ability to
connect the rifle
to the
shooter.*

“
No amount of technology will build a soul into a rifle — it must come from the gunsmith.”



Marc Newton hand inspects stocks before moving onto the next design phase.

hunting; my background in building and designing fueled my curiosity, but a career in this field was not something I dreamed possible,” Stevens shared. “To experience the whole process, from creating a gun to its being used for its purpose, is very rewarding. It adds a different level of connection to the entire experience.”

CONNECTING THE RIFLE TO THE SHOOTER

You see, “old school” at John Rigby & Co. isn’t about connecting to the past. It’s the ability to connect the rifle to the shooter. No amount of technology will build a soul into a rifle — it must come from the gunsmith.

“We try to really involve our customers in the build process. We don’t build guns for them, we build guns with them,” Newton remarked.

This is part of why Slade was selected — he’s got an old-school soul, albeit with a touch of bluegrass. He’s from Kentucky, which wasn’t even a state (1792) when John Rigby & Co., was officially founded in 1775 in Dublin.

What were the other reasons John Rigby & Co. hired Slade?

“Lots of things,” said Newton. “When he asked me if he was to move to the country, if we would help him get some hunting, I think it was the moment when I knew I had to give him a job. The thing we are very passionate about at Rigby is people who hunt. My guys enjoy getting out there and using Rigby rifles and Rigby products and mixing with different people. I think it brings a certain experience to all our guns.”

Slade’s interest in Rigby can also be

credited to some old-school parenting.

“It was my dad who initially sparked my interest by sending me the job listing,” recalled Slade. “He is genuinely excited and fully supportive of my presence here. He’s delighted to see me contributing to a prestigious gunmaker like Rigby. My father owns a Single Square Bridge .416, and his enthusiasm for his gun led him to share the job posting with me on Instagram, expressing how cool it would be for me to work here.”

How did moving to England go over with Slade’s wife? Jolly well.

“My wife, being from West Sussex, particularly supports our decision to live in the UK,” said Slade. “We make trips back to the States once or twice a year, and my parents visit more often, as they love London, so we still have that family connection. My wife understands and backs my passion for the outdoors, making her a strong advocate for my role at Rigby. Overall, the decision to work for Rigby was influenced by the professional opportunities and the opportunity to be close to my wife’s family — an opportunity we couldn’t pass on.”

FROM BLUEGRASS TO BRITISH ROCK

Slade’s gunsmithing gig across the pond took a little explaining to his bluegrass friends.

“Initially, many had to look up information about the company, as it wasn’t immediately familiar to them,” he explained. “While some of my friends share an interest in hunting and shooting, I still have to explain the rich history of Rigby and the intricacies of what we do. The aspect that consistently

surprises and shocks them is the caliber of our high-end rifles. For many who are looking to become first-time home buyers, comparing the cost of these rifles to buying a house is a common theme. Investing in a gun at a level comparable to a real estate transaction is novel to them.”


It isn't novel to John Rigby & Co.'s primary audience though, who Newton describes as “adventurous, entrepreneurial types who appreciate the real things in life. Those who love going on an adventure, are passionate

about Africa and really enjoy connecting with people. I think it's very important — our team is all about the people, and this attracts a certain customer.”

Today, Slade continues to grow at John Rigby & Co. and Newton sees a bright future for him — he was recently promoted as head of Highland Stalker and Big Game sales.

“He's worked his way up on the bench working behind Big Game rifles and is now about to begin in his new role in sales for our Highland Stalker

and Big Game rifles,” said Newton. “He will be overseeing all the sales and the ordering of parts from Mauser, so it will become his baby.”

If you or someone you know is interested in joining Slade at John Rigby & Co., Le Jendre has some advice: “To pursue a career as a Rigby gunsmith, individuals can initiate the process by reaching out via email [rigbyacademy@johnrigbyandco.com]. Interested applicants are encouraged to submit their CV, along with a cover letter and, if available, a portfolio showcasing their relevant work. We particularly welcome candidates aged between 19 to 25 years old, who possess fine handwork skills, and ideally, have some familiarity with guns. Our aim is to nurture the next generation of gunsmiths, and we eagerly await applications from passionate individuals.” 

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By Jenna Buckley



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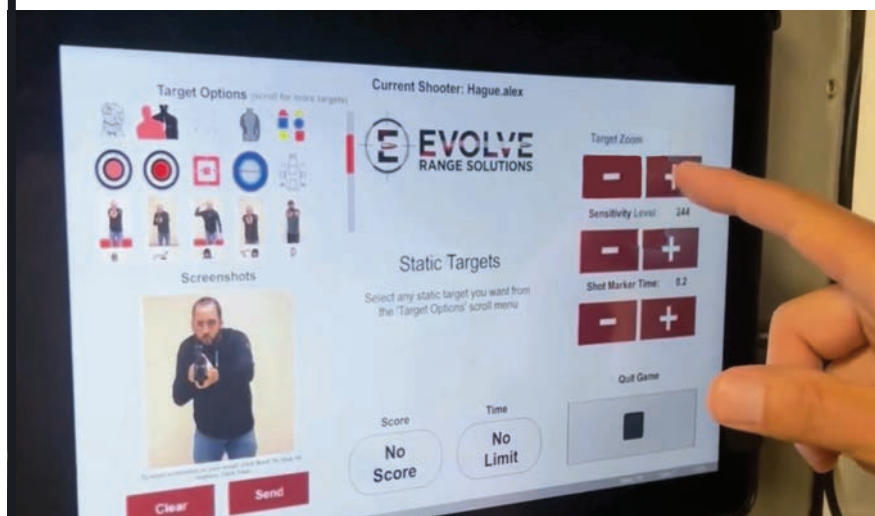
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Evolve Range Solutions (EVR) released an updated version of its digital **EV-R TARGET SYSTEM**. Static targets are now consolidated into a single, streamlined game where users can easily scroll and switch between targets with just a tap. With more training targets available in one scenario, training sessions are now more dynamic and efficient. EVR also added its own twist to the standard Dot Torture drill to enhance accuracy and training. And the IPSC game adds a new dimension to training options with a choice of four modes: Timed, Speed, Hits and Comstock.



FMG PUBLICATIONS

(760) 975-3831
fmgpubs.com

The 2024 Special Edition issue of **AMERICAN HANDGUNNER CONCEALED CARRY & SELF-DEFENSE** is now available. Features review the Walther PDP, .32 pocket revolvers, "Fighting With The Beretta Tomcat" and the S&W M&P 5.7. *Concealed Carry* showcases the guns of notorious gangster Baby Face Nelson, the "Gucci-est" handgun: the FN SCAR 15P and the combat-ready Thunder Ranch from Nighthawk. Self-defense topics range from understanding handgun recoil and proven rigs for concealed carry to bittersweet carry choices, why packing a lightweight isn't wimpy and more.

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filibuster in the Senate; Congress will pass firearm bans, magazine bans and universal background checks. It'll be 'Katy bar the door' — and too late for us to do anything about it."

Keane pointed out that even if Democrats are unsuccessful in controlling Congress, Harris could act unilaterally — as shutting down firearms imports or exports doesn't require an act of Congress.

Even with Harris' recent reveal of being a gun owner during the Sept. 10 presidential debate — later adding, "We're not taking anybody's guns away" — her past history as California district attorney (e.g., microstamping) and President Biden's "gun czar" (e.g., overseeing the Office of Gun Violence Prevention) mean the stakes couldn't be higher, according to Keane.

"This truly is the most important election for the Second Amendment in our lifetime," he said. "In the past, Harris called for mandatory confiscation. She now says she isn't.



This truly is the most important election for the Second Amendment in our lifetime."

**Larry Keane • Senior VP & General Counsel
NSSF**

So, was she lying then? Is she lying now? Or does she just lie now and then? People need to wake up, get registered and vote."

At this point, this is all a big *if*. However, if we don't do our part and *vote* we leave the future of our industry, sport and tradition — and constitutionally protected right — to chance. As Ava Flanell wrote in this



month's *Best Practices* column (p. 26): "Complacency has consequences."

I know I'm preaching to the choir here, but there's too much at stake to stand by and do nothing. Regardless of whether you, your friends, family, employees or customers think this is all political rhetoric or the worst-case scenario will come to fruition — if you do nothing else on Election Day — don't risk your rights, *vote!*

For more info on #GUNVOTE, visit gunvote.org.

OICC PROVIDES ASSETS FOR BUSY HUNTING, SELLING SEASONS

Outdoor Stewards of Conservation Foundation (OSCF) along with Wildlife Management Institute created the Outdoor Industry Communication Council (OICC) to form a coalition of state wildlife agencies, NGOs, media, industry brands, organizations and manufacturers — with the goal of better informing the public of the benefits of getting outdoors and participating in activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and target shooting.

HATS (Hunters, Anglers, Trappers and Shooters) contribute billions of dollars annually to land, fish and wildlife conservation. Funding from HATS makes up a large portion

of state department of natural resources' budgets and allows them to do all the terrific work they do, much of which supports hunting and shooting.

As hunters hit their favorite outdoor retailers in preparation for hunting season, it's an important time to inform and engage them on a variety of topics.

"The time is now to reach those audiences we all depend on," said OSCF Executive Director Jim Curcuruto. "HATS do so much for conservation and improving all types of habitats — with a lot of that not connected to hunting, shooting or trapping at all. We need to spread those messages and grow our industry."

The OICC provides a number of assets — including social media graphics and content, as well as recent studies for all to feature or supplement their communications



efforts.

"A quick signup on our website opens the conversation and our team is standing by to support specific needs and requests," said Curcuruto.

Content is aimed to be shareable, whether on partners' websites and social channels, in electronic newsletters, in podcasts or in printed publications. Membership is free and takes minutes to register. outdoorstewards.org

[/ outdoorstewards.org](https://outdoorstewards.org)



BY JADE MOLDAE

MAYBE IT IS, MAYBE IT ISN'T: REGARDLESS, VOTE!

We've all heard the same phrase the last few election cycles — *"This is the most important election of our lifetime"* — so much so the statement has maybe lost some of its potency.

But, to our industry — our livelihood and rights as gun owners — this presidential election very well could be.

Here on the eve of Election Day, voters are tasked with choosing between two very different candidates — and polar opposites when it comes to gun rights and the Second Amendment.

While there are committed voters devoted to each side, those "in the middle" are the ones who will ultimately decide who sits in the White House on Jan. 20, 2025. And these voters are the ones our industry needs to reach and educate.

GET OUT, AND #GUNVOTE

To that end, one effective mobilization tool is NSSF's #GUNVOTE initiative. This get-out-the-vote (GOTV) campaign has run in every federal election since 2000 and has gradually risen in prominence each cycle.

According to NSSF Senior VP and General Counsel Larry Keane, this targeted campaign is focused on

battleground states for the president, as well as the U.S. Senate races.

"The purpose of this campaign is to reach out to gun owners in battleground states — which will determine the outcome of the election — and make sure they get registered to vote," said Keane. "That's the first step."

The second aim of #GUNVOTE is to educate gun owners on where candidates stand on Second Amendment issues, while the third — as early voting has already started in some states — is to ensure they make sure their voices are heard by voting in person or by absentee ballot.

GETTING INVOLVED

Keane identified three ways members of the industry can get involved in this effort.

1. Add the #GUNVOTE button on your website, giving customers a visual reminder of what's at stake and to get involved. ("We encourage everyone in the industry to add the #GUNVOTE button on their websites. Even if you're not in a battleground state, it helps spread the message," Keane noted.)

2. Encourage employees, friends, family members and customers to vote and get educated on where the

candidates stand not only on Second Amendment issues, but also on conservation.

3. In battleground states, NSSF is mailing storefront dealers #GUNVOTE stickers to pass out to customers and encourage others to spread the message. (Keane shared an amusing anecdote: "We love seeing #GUNVOTE stickers on the backs of pickup trucks around the country — and people send us pictures of them pretty regularly.")

NO PLACE FOR COMPLACENCY

According to Keane, NSSF committed unprecedented resources to the 2024 campaign. And why is that? Well, simply put: the outcome of this election will have significant ramifications for our industry.

If Vice President Kamala Harris



If Harris is elected president, what we see from ATF now will only get worse. Zero tolerance for gun dealers will become 'subzero' tolerance.'

Larry Keane - Senior VP & General Counsel
NSSF

is elected president, along with a Democrat sweep of Congress, it's not a hyperbole to say this would be worst-case scenario for the longevity of our industry. Keane shared what a Harris presidency and Democrat-controlled Congress would look like.

"If Harris is elected president, what we see from ATF now will only get worse. Zero tolerance for gun dealers will become 'subzero' tolerance," he said. "She'll appoint anti-gun justices to the Supreme Court — opening up the opportunity to revisit *Heller*, *Bruen* and *McDonald* decisions. She'll blow up the

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**BRAG ABOUT HOW MANY YOU SHOT,
NOT HOW MUCH YOU SPENT.**



SPANDAU S2

Remember when a hunter was measured by how well he shot, and not how much he spent? When memories were measured in curly tails, not dollar bills? We do. And that is why we created the Spandau S2. A reliable, extremely well balanced waterfowl gun built around the Inertia operating system for unmatched performance at a price that shows that you still know the true measure of a hunter.



SPANDAU
— A R M S —

SpandauArms.com



GUNVOTE[®]

DON'T RISK YOUR RIGHTS / 2024

It is crucial that firearm retailers become informed about candidates' positions and spread the message about this year's #GUNVOTE at every possible opportunity.

What can you do to help?

- Download and display NSSF's #GUNVOTE icon on your website and social media pages.
- Encourage your customers and employees to register to vote.
- Visit nssf.org/gunvote and encourage others to do the same.
- On Election Day, #GUNVOTE!

Follow #GUNVOTE on:



NSSF[®]
The Firearm Industry
Trade Association