

## SPECIAL MESSAGE:

# **VOTE** **'YES'** **ON THE 2017 NRA BYLAW AMENDMENTS**

by Allan D. Cors, President, National Rifle Association

If you're a voting member of the National Rifle Association, you'll soon receive your ballot for this year's NRA elections. As usual, you'll have the chance to vote for candidates to fill one-third of the NRA Board's 75 seats (and, sadly, one additional vacancy due to the death of Board member Buster Bachhuber). But you'll also have the opportunity to vote on a comprehensive package of important NRA bylaw amendments that have been unanimously recommended by the NRA Board. These proposals deserve your support and your "YES" vote.

To understand the importance of the proposed amendments, a little history is in order. In 1977, NRA members who wanted to ensure that the NRA would be an effective force in the fight for the Second Amendment—not just another gun club—took action at the NRA's Annual Meeting of Members in my hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio. In an epic meeting that lasted into the wee hours of the morning, we adopted a series of bylaw amendments that strengthened the members' voice in the Association.

The centerpiece of the Cincinnati changes is a petition process that allows individuals to qualify as candidates for the NRA board by gathering signatures from 250 of their fellow members. The petition process has played a critical role in bringing fresh voices to the leadership of the NRA, and in making it the potent political force that it remains today. Also in Cincinnati, the members voted for a process under which some member-passed bylaw provisions are considered so important that they can only be changed by a later vote of the members—which is why these amendments are being submitted for your approval.

The following year, NRA members voted to further strengthen their role in the Association by creating a recall process.

Similar to laws in many states, the NRA Bylaws now allow for a member petition, hearing, and vote to remove one or more officers or board members before the expiration of their terms in office.

A few years later, in 1985, another amendment enhanced member participation by allowing the Bylaws to be amended by mail—not just by the small minority with the time, money and commitment to attend the Annual Meeting of Members. However, the old provision allowing amendments at the Members' Meeting was also kept on the books.

I'm proud of my role in fighting for the reforms that started in Cincinnati, and they have been important in strengthening the role of NRA members in guiding our Association. But nearly 40 years have passed. We are due for some updates.

For starters, the NRA has grown enormously, and the petition requirements established in the 1970s haven't kept pace with that growth, or with modern communications technology. Together, these developments may leave our Association vulnerable to the few, while not protecting the voices of the many.

Let's look at the numbers. In 1977, when the members at Cincinnati voted to require 250 signatures for a candidate petition, the NRA had only one million members, and only about 200,000 voting members. And to gather signatures, candidates had to go out looking for them personally, at gun shows, club meetings, and competitions.

Today, we have five million members, with nearly half of them eligible to vote in our 2017 elections—and Internet forums and social media have made it far easier to gather signatures on both candidate and recall petitions.

The Board's recommended package of bylaw amendments offers the same solution to both of these situations: a

change to a percentage-based system, in which signature requirements are based on the number of valid ballots cast in the previous board election. It's the same type of system used in many states for qualifying ballot initiatives, and will keep the signature requirements in sync with the NRA's growth as we head toward six, eight, or ten million members.

The Board also recommends petition thresholds that would increase the signature requirements based on typical turnout. The requirement would be somewhat higher for candidate petitions (at 0.5 percent of the previous board election vote), and significantly higher for recall petitions (at 5 percent of the previous vote). The reason for the difference is that a recall petition is an extreme measure that shouldn't be undertaken lightly. After all, a successful recall can undo the members' vote for a director, or the elected Board's vote for an officer—even though the person targeted could be removed by ordinary means in one to three years, depending on his or her office. (It's also worth remembering that the NRA Bylaws already have a process for ethics complaints, which can be carried out faster and cheaper than the six-figure cost of holding a recall election.)

In addition, since the creation of the recall petition process in 1978, only one recall petition has been put to a member vote. That campaign—just last year—was fought hard and fairly, and although it was unsuccessful, it exposed a number of concerns about the administrative procedure and basic fairness of the current recall process. The proposed bylaw changes would address those issues by allowing the targeted individual, or the NRA itself, to seek dismissal of a future petition that might be frivolous, malicious, or disruptive, with fair appeals of those decisions by both sides.

Finally, the proposal would repeal the outdated process for bylaw amendments at the Members' Meeting, specifying instead that all bylaw amendments voted on by the members could only be decided by mail ballot. Since 1985, this is the only way the members have actually voted on bylaw amendments—and it's much fairer to the overwhelming majority of NRA members, who deserve a full voice in our Association regardless of their ability to travel.

On November 8, NRA members and millions of other concerned Americans voted to preserve and restore freedom in America. But if you're a voting member of the NRA, your work isn't done, because these bylaw amendments are critically important for the long-term health of the organization. Please watch for your February issue of the NRA magazines (or for your first-class ballot mailing, if you don't get a magazine); study the proposals carefully; and join me and your NRA Board in voting "YES" on the bylaw amendments.



**Allan D. Cors**  
President, National Rifle Association

Allan D. Cors is president of the National Rifle Association of America. First elected to the NRA Board of Directors in 1973, Cors has served as president of The NRA Foundation and as the chairman of the Legislative Policy Committee, Finance Committee, and Gun Collectors Committee. He was a principal advocate for the establishment of NRA's Political Action Committee.

Cors graduated from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, earning admission to the Ohio bar in 1961. Coming to Washington, D.C., in 1962, he served as a counsel with the Judiciary Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives. He joined Corning Inc. in 1966, and for 34 years served as the company's director of government affairs and senior vice president.

A lifelong hunter and competitive shooter, Cors was a firing member of the Virginia State high power rifle team at Camp Perry National Matches from 1966 to 2005. He has earned the Distinguished Rifleman Badge, President's Hundred Tabs, and Elihu Root medals, among many other competitive accolades.

In 1982, his passion for collecting military vehicles began with the acquisition of a World War II-era Ford Jeep. Today, his collection of more than 100 operational vehicles is shared with the public at the Virginia Museum of Military Vehicles in northern Virginia. He is the founder and chairman of the National Museum of Americans in Wartime, a museum dedicated to honoring the men and women who served America in uniform, in the clandestine services and on the homefront.

Cors established NRA's Allan D. Cors Endowment in 1998, which sponsors the WWII-Axis, WWII-Allies, WWII-U.S., and WWII-Diorama exhibits at NRA's National Firearms Museum in Fairfax, Va.

He is a member of the Ohio and Virginia Gun Collectors Associations and American Society of Arms Collectors, and a board member of the CMP (Corporation for the Promotion of Rifle Practice and Firearms Safety Inc.).

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