This morning marks the 147th annual meeting of the members of the National Rifle Association of America. For me personally, it’s my 23rd. And I want to thank each and every one of you for your support of our noble cause, because you know what’s at stake and you’re willing to fight for it—year in, year out. You remind politicians over and over that they don’t rule you—they work for you.

Together, we’re the most bare-knuckled defenders of individual freedom in American history. Have we won every fight? No. Is the work finished? Far from it. Is the NRA the only thing standing between the most organized and energized enemy of firearm freedom in American history? You’re damn right it is. And we’re not going anywhere.

When we’re together and united, we’ve achieved victories no one thought possible. Thirty years ago, Right to Carry wasn’t a law, it was a pipe dream. To everyone but the NRA, that is.

We started the movement in Florida and then fought like hell to get it passed across the country. It’s taken three decades of working statehouse after statehouse to get to where we are today. But we never stopped fighting.
Now we’re knocking down the door on National Right-to-Carry reciprocity. We’ve got a House that passed it, a president ready to sign it, and now it's time for the Senate to do their damn jobs and restore the rights of law-abiding Americans!

Mark my words, any Senator who thinks they can block the rights and the will of the people is gonna be held accountable. We didn’t come this far, and fight this hard, to have our freedom denied by a bunch of elitist politicians who surround themselves with armed security.

And we’re not stopping with reciprocity, either. Suppressors? We’re gonna get that done. More land for hunting? That too.

I don’t care how long it takes, I don’t care how hard we have to fight, we aren’t gonna stop until “shall not be infringed” actually means “shall not be infringed!” No one fights longer and harder than we do. Because we aren’t motivated by short-term feelings and frenzies—we’re driven by the timeless principles of individual freedom.

As much money as they can muster and as many lies as they can spew all over TV and social media, the enemies of freedom will never have the endurance that comes from the truth. Back in 1994, they thought they were on their way to victory when Bill Clinton passed his so-called “assault weapons ban.” Turns out, we cleaned their clocks in the midterms and kept fighting until we put George Bush in the White House.
By the time the Clinton ban was set to expire in 2004, we had so thoroughly reshaped the government with true believers in freedom that it was barely even a fight—we tossed that horrible bill into the dumpster fire of history where it belonged.

The AR culture that’s on display all over the exhibit hall this weekend is the direct result of all that hard work. And not just for hunting and target shooting and 3-Gun, but for empowering good people to protect themselves and their communities.

People like Stephen Willeford. When he heard shots ring out at the church across the street in Sutherland Springs, he didn’t even stop to put his boots on. He grabbed his AR-15 and ran toward the gunfire. His quick actions saved countless lives.

Stephen is the definition of a good guy with a gun, and we’re putting his story on national television so the whole country can see who we are and what we stand for.

Take a look.

[VIDEO]

Most of you probably saw him receive his Life membership at the ILA forum yesterday, but Stephen’s here with us again this morning, and he deserves a "thank you" every chance we can give it. So Stephen, please stand up and accept our thanks.
Without the NRA fighting decade after decade for Second Amendment freedom, Stephen Willeford doesn’t have a firearm to fight with on that tragic day last fall. But you’d better believe that evil monster still would’ve been armed.

Without the NRA, there wouldn’t have been a new gun made in America in the past decade, because every manufacturer would’ve been sued out of existence. That’s no exaggeration. Most of you probably remember.

A bunch of big-city mayors were THIS close to forcing gun companies to be held liable when a violent criminal shot someone. They don’t blame Toyota when a drunk driver kills a pedestrian, and they don’t blame Coca-Cola when Rosie can’t put down the big gulp, but when some three-time loser who’s out on early parole shoots a young mother, they want to shut down every gun manufacturer in America. And they would’ve done it if it weren’t for the members of the National Rifle Association.

Hell, without us, if the Second Amendment even existed at all by now, it would be the weakest, most toothless sentence in the Bill of Rights. Instead, it’s the best-protected individual freedom in the country—and getting stronger every day.

Love us or hate us, there isn’t a movement in America that doesn’t wish they could figure out how we do it. We’ve done more to advance the cause of individual freedom in the past three or four decades than any organization in any time period, ever.

So it’s no surprise the target on our backs is so big even Mike Bloomberg could probably hit it. Lucky for him, you don’t need to be a genius to figure
out how to get rid of the Second Amendment. Just destroy the NRA. We’re his first, second and third priority.

In the wake of the Parkland tragedy, he and his freedom-hating allies in Congress, in the media and in the shadows, didn’t organize a single protest against the authorities who should have done their jobs and stopped the killer. Not one. Instead, they focused America’s attention on blaming you and me. These people know damn well the NRA has nothing to do with that tragedy, or any other tragedy.

If you care about holding people accountable for Parkland, you ought to start with that miserable excuse for a sheriff. Or try the FBI, who were notified multiple times about the killer and did nothing. Or how about the armed sheriff’s deputy who refused to go into the school while children were being slaughtered?

And that’s just for starters. I bet most people have never heard of Barack Obama’s Promise program. This disaster of social engineering was designed to juice the statistics by not enforcing violent behavior at schools. So superintendents like Broward County’s Robert Runcie could claim a huge drop in student arrests. Without that abomination of a program, this monster very well could’ve been arrested long before he got the idea to shoot up the school, and every one of those innocent kids would be alive today.

The fact that the media spent more time vilifying 5 million peaceful, law-abiding Americans who didn’t do a damn thing wrong than they did shedding light on the failed leaders who actually ARE accountable, isn’t just a pathetic attempt to attack the Second Amendment, it’s an
outright abuse of the First Amendment, and they ought to be ashamed of themselves! But holding failed leaders accountable and fixing the broken culture that allowed this tragedy to happen isn’t the point for these people.

We have to understand, they are waging all-out war against our organization. All their anger, all their rage, all their money and anti-gun energy is funneled in one direction and one direction only: this room.

Nothing else stands between these people and the end of Second Amendment freedom. So their plan is clear. Divide, demonize and weaken the NRA. Flip a few states against the Second Amendment. Flip the House against the Second Amendment, too, and make Nancy Pelosi speaker so they can impeach President Trump. And if they can’t impeach the president before 2020 comes around, they’ll make the path for him to win in 2020 really shaky, really fast.

If we lose Congress and the White House, we don’t have to guess what they’ll do to our rights. They’re already openly calling for the complete repeal of the Second Amendment. Everything will be on the table, and they have never felt so emboldened, so energized, as they do right now.

If we don’t come out stronger, more united and more committed than ever before, this meeting next year will feel like a funeral. So let’s get united and let’s get inspired, and let’s prove the experts wrong once again.

These are the same people who told us that the NRA could never elect Donald Trump as President. Now they tell us that the majority of Americans don’t believe in the Second Amendment.
They say the NRA is a failing, unpopular organization. They say we’re just a ragtag gang holding the will of the country hostage. Here’s a question I wish one of those geniuses would ask: If the country doesn’t want to be free, why the hell do they keep voting for freedom? Almost makes you think there’s more to the story than you see on CNN.

The media hates us when we say it, but it’s true: Like it or not, we’re the oldest civil rights organization in America. It’s really inconvenient for the freedom-hating fake champions of diversity and social justice, but when you attack the NRA, you’re attacking the rights of every single law-abiding American. Gay, straight, white, black, rich, poor, Christian, Muslim and none of the above.

You’re attacking an organization that has welcomed members of all races, faiths and backgrounds from its very founding. In fact, many of the famed Buffalo Soldiers were proud NRA members during the early part of the 20th century. We don’t fight for a class or a skin color. We fight for the most natural of natural rights: the right to self-defense.

It was a life-or-death freedom for freed slaves after the Civil War, in both the North and South, and it was a life-or-death freedom for their kids and grandkids growing up in a troubled time for African-Americans. Ida B. Wells even famously said “the Winchester rifle deserves a place of honor in every black home,” because that freedom gave them a security the government too often did not.

It was a life-or-death freedom for the Korean shop owners during the L.A. riots, who used their firearms to protect their lives and their livelihoods as the city around them burned.
It was a life-or-death freedom for the most vulnerable citizens in New Orleans, who were too poor to flee the city before Katrina hit. In the aftermath of that storm, the only semblance of law and order came from the good people who were able to defend themselves and their families.

And it’s a life-or-death freedom for millions of Americans, every single day, in good neighborhoods and bad ones, on sidewalks, in restaurants, at work and at home.


If you’re an NRA member, you believe that every human being has a right to protect themselves. This principled conviction is the core of our strength, and the heart of our courage. It’s what led Charlton Heston to march with Martin Luther King long before it was fashionable. He understood that when one person’s freedoms are denied, the freedoms of all are diminished. And that when one freedom is called into question, all of our freedoms suffer.

The NRA has done more to advance the individual freedoms of American citizens of all backgrounds than any other organization in history. We restored the Second Amendment by convincing the American public that freedom isn’t something to fear, but something to cherish.

But a lot of Americans didn’t need convincing. They needed help.
Josephine Byrd was one of them. She’s been fighting for freedom her whole life. But as a senior citizen living in government housing, she didn’t have a whole lot of options when they tried to tell her she couldn’t have a firearm to defend herself. Her rights and her life didn’t matter to the faceless, nameless government bureaucracy.

But they mattered to the NRA. We stepped in and helped take her case all the way to the Delaware Supreme Court.

Take a look.

[VIDEO]

Josephine Byrd is an American hero, and she’s with us here today. Help me give her the respect and appreciation she deserves!

I don’t care if we’re the only ones left who still believe in freedom and are willing to fight for Josephine Byrd, we will never back down from the principles of individual liberty that made America the greatest country on earth!

Friends, for all of our victories, and every bit of ground we’ve gained, we live every day in the shadow of this haunting truth: Thirty years of progress can collapse overnight, at any time. Everything we’ve won, every inch we fought so hard to gain, all of it can go up in smoke.

Josephine’s rights, Stephen Willeford’s rights, your rights, and your kids’ and grandkids’ rights—all of them could be denied and punished by the government sooner than you can ever imagine.
There are dark and powerful forces working to make that happen. But there’s one thing they will never understand. Deep in the hearts of every American citizen lurks a burning desire for freedom. Instinctively, naturally, each of us wants to be free. When we speak out as NRA members, when we tell the truth about the values we fight for, we activate that desire in the overwhelming majority of people all over this country.

But the other side’s on fire right now. They’re angry. They’re energized. And they’re giving money like crazy. They think they’re just months away from total victory. Listen to what Nancy Pelosi said just this week:

[VIDEO: "We will win ... I will run for speaker ... I feel confident about it, and my members do too."]

The truth is: It’s either going to be Nancy's vision or ours. Here’s the good news: We might live in complicated times, but this ain’t a complicated choice. Their vision will result in the end of individual freedom in this country. Our vision is for freedom to stay right where it belongs, in the hands and hearts of good people.

The Second Amendment is up for grabs. But they’re gonna have to come through this room to get it. So steel yourselves, and lock arms. They want a fight, we’ll give it to ‘em.
To all who dream of tearing apart the God-given rights of innocent people, to every politician fighting to deprive us of the same security you insist on for yourself, we say bring it on. Hit us with everything you’ve got. Throw every punch, every insult, every ounce of venom right at us and we’ll come right back at you stronger than you could ever imagine.

Because we’re the National Rifle Association of America. We’ve never been scared of a fight and we’re sure as hell not scared of this one. We’re the biggest, baddest, grassroots freedom-fighting machine this world’s ever seen.

We owe it to our kids, to our grandkids and to the men and women who paid the ultimate price to secure our freedoms. We owe it to them to win. And by God, that's what we're going to do.

Thank you.