

Stephen Gutowski (00:03.696)

All right. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to another episode of the Weekly Reload Podcast. I'm your host, Stephen Gutowski. I'm also a CNN contributor and the founder of TheReload.com where you can head over and sign up for our free newsletter today. If you want to keep up to date with what's going on with guns in America. This week's episode is brought to you once again by The Dispatch. I'll talk a little bit more about them at the end, but first we're to get into our main topic, which is, well, the assassination attempt on president, former president Donald Trump's life and the RNC and how all this

shake out in our gun politics, not just in the moment, but perhaps long-term as well. And to discuss that, I have one of the best minds in America when it comes to gun politics and policy, Cam Edwards from Bearing Arms. Welcome back to the show, Cam. Thanks for being with us.

Cam Edwards (00:51.466)

Absolutely. Thanks for the invite, Steve.

Stephen Gutowski (00:53.564)

Yeah, always glad to have you have a ton of respect for your point of view on these things. I think you're you're always honest and how these things come out what you think about them. So yeah, well first off, tell people a little bit more about bearing arms before we get rolling here.

Cam Edwards (01:08.012)

Yeah, sure. You know, I think that the mission to Bering Arms is very similar to that of the reload. We are maybe a little less analysis, a little more opinion, little more news of the day, right? So we're covering armed citizen stories. I don't really think you guys get into that. You're more focused on the policy. So, but you know, we're talking policy, we're talking politics, we're talking legal stuff, as well as, you know, the real world applications of a right to keep and bear arms. And of course we have the Bering Arms Cam and Company podcast. We do that Monday through Thursday.

Stephen Gutowski (01:24.308)

Not as much. Yeah.

Cam Edwards (01:37.856)

I'm very guest driven like this podcast is. I don't like it when it's just me up there, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, for half an hour or so. I like to talk to folks who are smarter than me, who have more knowledge and information about topics than me so we can bring that information to folks. So, like I said, I think it's very complimentary to the job that you're doing at the

Stephen Gutowski (01:54.44)

Yes, technically competitors, but really I think complimentary roles. You guys have a lot more of the opinion and advocacy side than we do. So I think it fits together well. Come from a pretty similar background and point of view, although you have a much longer time in radio and hosting. your show.

Cam Edwards (02:13.144)

Well, that's because I'm a little bit older. You'll get there one day, Stephen. It's all right. I just got a head start, buddy.

Stephen Gutowski (02:17.952)

Thank you. But yeah, your show is masterful and you've always been one of the best at it. So I recommend people check out Cameo Company. And I've been on the show many times in the past and hopefully in the future. In fact, I just re-optimized CNN contract and I have a little more leeway now to do shows like yours. So perhaps just in the back end, it'll be a little bit easier to get on, which I think will make my life a little bit less stressful at times. So it's nice.

Cam Edwards (02:44.682)

I am very pleased to hear that for two reasons. One, that you're gonna continue to be on CNN, and two, that it's gonna be a little bit easier to get you back on Kamen Company. So congratulations, that's awesome.

Stephen Gutowski (02:51.892)

Yes. Thank you. Yes. I'm happy about that as well. But so turning to an unhappy topic, now, the, the president was a former president, Donald Trump, potential future president, Donald Trump. He's leading the polls right now, as we know. well, somebody tried to kill him, like just straight up that somebody shot him. He got very lucky, frankly. And it only clipped his ear.

Sadly, several other people in the crowd were not as lucky. One man was killed and two more were severely wounded. So a pretty terrible, horrific event, you know, especially at this moment in our country, in our politics with things as divided as they are. is, and now, know, I don't want to give too much credence to the shooter here. don't know that his motive was really connected to the politics. It's kind of sounding more and more like you

was closer to your typical mass shooter and his motivations. don't, there's still, this hasn't even been, I think it's been one week, right? I guess as we're filming this. So we'll get more information on that and,

Cam Edwards (03:58.903)

Mm

Stephen Gutowski (04:02.856)

regardless, a horrible act of political violence. And I wish this one, you know, we spend a lot of time talking about unprecedented events that we're all living through. is sort of a common theme you hear a lot in media or on social media. This, unfortunately, not as unprecedented as some of the other things we've dealt with recently. This is something that has been a problem in America and really everywhere in the world.

for our entire history. And that's kind of where I want to start because what we tend to see in the United States, at least over the last 60 years, is that the major gun control bills that have passed at the federal level, the ones that add a significant amount of new restrictions on who can own guns and how you can buy them and sell them.

Those have tended to come after political assassinations or assassination attempts, right? We can look at the Gun Control Act, 1968, and the Brady Act was 1992, if I remember correctly, 93, yeah, as your prime examples of this. And so, you know, we're still in the immediate aftermath here, but that's where my mind goes to on this front.

Cam Edwards (05:12.944)

I think it was,

Stephen Gutowski (05:27.724)

as far as gun policy is concerned with this and perhaps gun politics as well. We also just had the RNC and I think we'll get into some of that and how it relates to this in a little bit. just give me your thoughts on, what are you seeing right now in the immediate aftermath? One week out, do you see any change in our gun politics or the future of gun policy today?

Cam Edwards (05:52.477)

You know, it's interesting because in the week or so since this has, you know, been one of the primary topics, and again, I mean, you talk about all of the unprecedented news, it's amazing that an attempt on Donald Trump's life is just one of the big stories that we've been covering this week, right? And I think that may be one of the reasons why the push for gun control has been somewhat muted.

Because this is not occupied a hundred percent of our attention, right? We've had the RNC going on. You've had the content. Democrats are a little distracted right now, right? They would typically be the ones who would be pushing for gun control. And right now you've got some of them pushing for Joe Biden to stay in as the candidate. You've got some of them trying to push Joe Biden out as the nominee for the Democrats. So I think the Democrats are a little distracted. What's surprising to me is that the calls from the gun control groups have actually been fairly muted.

you know, been talking as much maybe about these ammo vending machines as the need to make changes to our gun

laws because somebody tried to kill Donald Trump. So I don't think that we've actually seen really any change. It's been interesting to me to see this sort of expectation on the part of the media that this would change a lot of Republican minds. I saw a Reuters piece from the RNC this week where they were talking to delegates.

folks who were there at the convention. And the reporters even included in their story, I mean, it just seemed like they were surprised that nobody that they talked to said, yeah, we need to ban AR -15s now. my, the scales have fallen for my eyes. You know, I think as we are learning more about not just the individual who committed this act, but the hour and maybe days before this attack, the failures of security. I think that has become a big topic. And I think

is probably where most of the focus is going to be. This individual, he used a semi -automatic rifle. He could have used a bolt action hunting rifle at that distance. Might have even been more accurate. We don't know. But it seems weird to blame it on the hardware when the Secret Service was not up on that roof. Law enforcement had not secure the perimeter of that building even though they were inside. I'm stunned, Stephen, that nobody had a drone.

Stephen Gutowski (07:54.442)

Yeah, really any rifle from that distance.

Cam Edwards (08:10.236)

flying overhead to keep an eye on the tops of these buildings that weren't secure. But we also now know

Stephen Gutowski (08:15.456)

Apparently he had a drone and was flying it around before the event happened, which is another remarkable thing.

Cam Edwards (08:19.67)

Right. And that's the thing. We know that this individual was identified and seen as sort of a suspicious person about an hour before the shooting happened. We know that there were people who were pointing to the top of that building, telling law enforcement in the minutes before the shots were fired, hey, there's somebody up there. So I think that kind of like Uvalde in Parkland, a couple of other high profile shootings where there were pretty clear security failures.

I don't think it's wrong to say, well, first of all, I I should note my own bias. I don't think I'm ever going to get to the point where I say, yes, because somebody did a bad thing with a gun, come take my guns away. I just don't think I'm ever going to get there. But I think there are a lot of Americans who say, well, why are we talking about this really divisive issue about banning AR -15s or raising the ACP as a firearm when there were clear security lapses, when there were things that are not policy discussions, right?

but practical failures that we need to address before we start mucking about with people's civil rights. I think that is part of what's going on, but I also think that Americans are largely dug in on this issue. Second Amendment advocates are not going to say, all right, come take my guns away, because a gun was used in a violent crime. Gun control advocates are not going to say, you know what, you keep a hold of your guns.

because of a defensive gun use. We had an incredible story at Bearing Arms this week about a guy with a red flag order against him, a protective order against him, broken to his ex -girlfriend's house with an axe, excuse me, burst through the door and was shot and killed by the woman's stepson. We're not gonna hear anybody say I was wrong about red flag loss because of that. We are sort of, I think, entrenched in our positions and I don't know

a specific incident, matter how profile, is really going to change a lot, except maybe at the margins, one or 2 % either way.

Stephen Gutowski (10:21.022)

Yeah. And I agree with your view on this so far in terms of the reaction being, know, our gun politics are surprisingly stable and really nothing has changed. And what I can tell there, there have been, you know, your typical statements that even President Biden

you know, related it to his pre -existing call for an AR -15 ban, right on the sale of AR -15s. And the gun control groups

all put out statements to that effect as well. But it wasn't, it didn't really go anywhere. And it wasn't something that they put a lot of effort into. And I do think that it, you in part it's because Democrats don't really want to, besides the fact that, like you mentioned, they're pretty distracted with their own.

party dynamics at this point, but they also I think understood the moment and they weren't going to go out

be way ahead of Trump and sort of attack, you know, almost effectively attack him for not advocating for new gun laws in the wake of his own assassination attempt, right? That's kind of, think they realize that's not maybe the best path to take. But it is pretty surprising, especially because of the circumstances being the shooter was an 18 or a 20 year old and he used an AR, which has been something

been at the center of the gun debate over the last five to 10 years, restrictions on 18 to 20 year olds.

Stephen Gutowski (11:53.376)

And you've seen that after several, even the shootings that you mentioned, the Parkland and Uvalde have generated that. And in fact, after Uvalde, they passed the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act, which put new, not necessarily new restrictions on what guns 18 -year -olds to 20 -year -olds could buy, but a new process for the background checks for those individuals, right? A much more onerous process that kind

Cam Edwards (12:14.789)

Mm

Stephen Gutowski (12:18.142)

It has the potential to really be a de facto waiting period for them, the way that it's constructed. so, you know, is, and yeah, a lot of the media attention hasn't, there have been some stories, but most of the attention has been on the Secret Service, the security failures, and then right into the RNC, right? And...

Yeah, there just hasn't been much discussion of this, which is kind of surprising.

Cam Edwards (12:48.061)

But I think part of that too is, you know, the more we learn about this young man, there don't appear to have any red flags, right? With the Uvalde shooter, there were some red flags in the background. With the Parkland shooter, there were numerous red flags, right? I mean, he had been reported to the FBI just a few days before that shooting was carried out from someone who said, hey, he's got plans to do something really bad. We haven't heard anything like that with this individual.

Not only have they not really found a political motive.

Stephen Gutowski (13:18.037)

I guess his parents called the police right before it happened, but they didn't necessarily say, they reported him like missing. It wasn't necessarily that they thought he was going to do something like this, but yeah.

Cam Edwards (13:22.895)

His parents call the police, think, right. They couldn't find him. They couldn't find the gun. But this is a matter

Right. And I guess he had posted something on a steam saying, you know, watch for my premiere on the, date of the shooting. It is a weird place. but again, there were, you know, there, there aren't any glaring red flags. The, the firearm was legally purchased what over a decade ago, by his father.

Stephen Gutowski (13:36.916)

Yeah, steam. It's a weird, weird place. Yeah.

Stephen Gutowski (13:49.344)

by his father too, that's another point. There isn't really a gun control wall that, like the restricting 18 to 20 year olds

from buying AR -15s or something, there's a common policy proposals out there. That actually wouldn't have had any effect. But to be fair, that's not usually what drives the conversation around gun laws, whether they would have actually had an effect on the particular shooting, right?

Cam Edwards (14:10.451)

Right. No, you're right. It is not. I think the anti -gun activists and the media, they look for those sort of data points, right? Or at least anecdotal points that they can say, aha, well, look, he did this. So if he had X law, that would have stopped it, right? In this case, it's really hard to find that. This person didn't have a criminal record. He had not been adjudicated as mentally ill. Again, we don't even have any

knowledge that his parents had any concerns before that day about his mental state. It's not like you've got people coming out of the woodwork saying, in high school, yeah, he was strange. was dissecting frogs, but not in biology at the lunchroom table. There's nothing like that. He was a quiet kid. He was a bullied kid, maybe. Didn't have a lot of friends. That describes a lot of kids who will never go on to commit a violent crime, much less try to kill a former president.

Stephen Gutowski (15:00.542)

Yeah, you kind of get conflicting views on him.

Stephen Gutowski (15:07.177)

Right.

Cam Edwards (15:08.007)

I don't think we can say, right, well, everybody who's shy, everybody who's awkward, or every young man who is shy or awkward is a red flag or a potential danger. I don't want to get to that point in society. So I think that is maybe, again, just one of the reasons why you haven't seen as much of a push. And it may be that, you know, that push comes later,

Going back to something that you said earlier, you talk about the Gun Control Act of 68, Brady Act of 93, which was not necessarily a direct result of the assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan, but this was the Brady bill. It was named after Jim Brady, Reagan's press secretary. He and his wife, Sarah, obviously very much instrumental in pushing for the background check bill. But you go back and you look at the 1970s, you had multiple attempts on Gerald Ford's life.

I think in what a three week period there were two attempts on Gerald Ford's life. Right? You know, there was a assassination attempt on Alexander Hague's life, right? As he was leaving the NATO and talking about running for president in 1980. That was a, I think a bomb, not a gun that was used. But we went through, you know, in the seventies, this period and in the late sixties, this period of, of where people really felt like, these political assassinations are becoming the

Stephen Gutowski (16:08.18)

Yeah, by women too, weirdly enough.

Cam Edwards (16:34.534)

And they didn't all actually lead to new gun control laws. In fact, a lot of them didn't lead to new legislation at all. And you could argue maybe Americans became numb to this or maybe they just realized, okay, gun control isn't the answer. There were a lot of other things going on at the same time, right? You had a rise in hijackings and of airplanes. know, the whole society sort of felt like it was crumbling, but you did

during that same decade, the push to ban handguns, right? Chicago enacted theirs in 82, but DC enacted theirs in 77. There was a referendum in 1974 in Massachusetts to ban handguns that failed. you know, I think short -term you're right, nothing has really changed. It does seem pretty stable, but that doesn't mean that this decade is going to be a decade where, you

gun control just sort of remains a non -issue or a bitterly divided issue in Congress and nothing gets done. I think gun owners and second -members supporters do have to be aware and concerned about the possibility that the Supreme Court has maybe cracked open the door to upholding more gun control laws, that blue states are gonna take advantage

of that. And I think that we need to at least be cognizant of

potential for the Republican party to put the second amendment on the back burner. I'm not really concerned about a Trump administration turning into a Biden administration when it comes to gun control or a Clinton administration, but I am a little concerned seeing the language change in the platform for the Republicans, seeing the lack of mention of the second amendment during the RNC for the most part, except for JD Vance's memaw.

Stephen Gutowski (18:05.13)
Sure.

Stephen Gutowski (18:19.71)
Right, sort of. Well, actually, that's what I want to

Cam Edwards (18:22.423)
I'm concerned that it's gonna become less of an important issue and less of a tier one issue, maybe more of a tier two

Stephen Gutowski (18:28.768)
And that's what I want to get into here next is sort of the midterm view from this assassination attempt. know, we, we, we saw the, the RNC was already going in this direction before this happened, right? Because the, platform came out.

It didn't, it stripped out all of the gun policy promises. Now that's policy promises. There is a single line that talks about protecting the right to keep and bear arms alongside, you know, a couple other rights from the, from the bill of rights. But, you know, we, we, we saw Trump come out and give his acceptance speech. It's the longest in history, at least in, I guess, modern history where people count such things. I don't think they were.

You counting the didn't have necessarily have stopwatches a hundred years ago to time the acceptance speeches But you know the televised era it was the longest one and there wasn't a single line in there About the Second Amendment or gun policy or anything? to that that regard and it and additionally the

RNC didn't feature any pro -gun speakers. No one from the NRA spoke on like in 2016 when Chris Cox was there. They didn't have any of the other gun control group, or sorry, gun rights groups. They didn't have any gun control groups either. So not to say that there's necessarily a big policy switcheroo. They're not bringing up new gun restrictions they wanna do, but they've just kind of gone silent on the issue of the Second Amendment.

You know, what makes, you kind of wonder where things might go in a second Trump term, because, you know, he, Trump has a mixed record on this stuff is what I would say, you know, like compared to Joe Biden. Yeah. It's probably an easy choice for gun voters, right? This even still, even with any concern that might arise from this stuff, but

Stephen Gutowski (20:23.84)
At the same time, know, he was, he's advocated for an assault when he was a private citizen. wrote a book in 2000 that did that. He reportedly considered backing one, uh, after the El Paso shooting, but, but, but decided not to, um, you know, that was in private as the New York times reporting. Um, he never publicly stated support for it. Then of course, after Parkland, he had the whole round table where he was the infamously said, you know,

take the guns first, due process second. He implemented the bump stock ban, which was just tossed by the Supreme Court as unlawful. These are, you know, obviously you can go the other side and say he appointed the Supreme Court justices that tossed that ban and that gave the country Bruin. And he's done a couple of other policy things like repealing an Obama era social security regulation that affected

the gun rights of people on social security. He made gun businesses essential during the pandemic. But I don't know, I just wonder where you see this all going with how the RNC went. Do you see any change from Trump, from the assassination attempt in particular, or do you think that the way the RNC went was just how it was gonna go anyway?

Cam Edwards (21:48.273)

I think the RNC was going to go how it was going to go. And again, this is not happening in a vacuum. It wasn't just that gun rights were taken out of the RNC platform. The major complaints that I've seen are actually from pro-life activists who say, OK, well, you're still talking about abortion, but you're setting some limits that we don't like. And that's different. Exactly.

Stephen Gutowski (22:12.414)

Yeah, they've changed policy there.

Cam Edwards (22:15.377)

This was sort of, hey, let's just not talk about it. So it's not that the platform said, okay, well, you know what? We support a national right to carry a national right to carry race and processing in 2016. Now we need to be left up to the States. Let's just let the States figure that out, right? That's not what they said. That's, is what they said about abortion, essentially. So I think that, you know, I don't take it personally as a gun owner. I think this is a political strategy and we'll see if this political strategy plays off. But I think the strategy and it's been,

Stephen Gutowski (22:32.116)

Yes.

Cam Edwards (22:45.232)

I think it's open now is that the Trump campaign believes that this is a moment where they can, if not run the table, you know, a la Reagan in 84, at least expand the map. Right. And so we've heard Chris LaSavita talk about New Jersey being in play or at least competitive Virginia, which appears to very much be the case right now that Virginia is in

And so, you know, they are specifically targeting, I think this again came from Chris LaSavita who said, you know, we're specifically targeting these groups here. So we are going after suburban moms. We're going after black men between the ages of 18 and 34. Suburban women, Steven, as you well know, I mean, those are some of the strongest supporters demographically for gun control. So if you are trying to appeal to suburban moms,

It makes sense from a political standpoint to say, okay, let's lay off the talk about protecting AR-15s and the second amendment, even if that's still what we believe. And let's talk to these voters about issues that they do care about. Am I concerned about what we're going to see in a second Trump administration? Not as concerned as I would be about what a second Biden term would be or a first term for Kamala Harris or Gavin Newsom. But, know, this is something that I think that in general,

Stephen Gutowski (24:01.684)

Mm -hmm. Sure.

Cam Edwards (24:08.464)

I've been thinking a lot about this and I don't think that we as second amendment supporters can afford to just be an auxiliary of one political party because when that happens, A, you get taken for granted, right? It's just assumed, well, you're going to vote for us because where else are you going to go? And I think that it does become easy to sort of put our issues on the back burner. But two, we have two major political parties in this country and we have seen over the past few years.

A growing number of Democrats, certainly independent voters who are exercising their second amendment rights. There are some in gun world who appear to not be happy about that development. They don't really like, you know, the idea of outreach to the LBGT community or things of that nature. I'm a big tent guy when it comes to the second amendment. You know, and I believe that the second amendment exists for we, people. So we as second amendment advocates should be fighting to have supporters across the political spectrum.

And I think this is a reminder, not just that Republicans may take gun owners for granted, but I think it's also an opportunity to start looking deep. we're going to have to, I mean, you really got to peer into the bushes and look in the shadows, but we've got to start building up pro-gun Democrats too. Because if we put all of our eggs in one political party's basket, that's when our second -memorize actually become more insecure, right?

And so I think a world in which you have blue dog Democrats or at least Democrats who can say, yeah, I'm not interested in trying to ban AR -15s. Let's go after violent criminals. Let's do violence, community gun violence prevention, things that are not law enforcement in nature. not about putting more laws on the books. I'd be fine with that. I'd be fine if Democrats said, you know what? I care about gun violence, but I don't believe we need to be targeting legal gun owners to try to reduce it. That would be a step forward for me.

And I think that for me over the next four years, that's one of the ways that one of the areas that I want to sort of take a look at and then, you know, have figure out how do we get this to be a more of a nonpartisan right that, you know, people in both political parties feel comfortable supporting.

Stephen Gutowski (26:28.126)

Yeah, no. And I think you've got the analysis right there on why this has happened at the RNC, why Trump didn't talk about it, why the RNC cut the promises out of its platform. I mean, as much as like, I don't know, your average swing state voter is not reading the party platforms, right? But, but, you know, the signaling of that I think is entirely.

intended to try and remove a potentially controversial issue from their talking points, from their point of view. I don't think it's so Donald Trump got shot and then he had a change of heart on the politics of guns. I don't think that's what happened. I think this was a pre-planned thing. And the reason I think it ought to be concerning for gun rights advocates, as you just mentioned there, is it is the Republican Party essentially taking them entirely for granted.

promising them anything at all, at least not outside of sort of maybe hushed whispers or when they're in a room where they don't think it's going to get a lot of attention to make promises like that. And it does seem to be a shift because Trump himself has gone and spoken to the NRA twice this year already and made a series of gun policy promises to them. Although I will note that at the

speech to the NRA, he did come out and say that gun voters don't, gun owners don't vote. And I don't know, it seems like they've really taken that concept to heart and they're just kind of, they don't necessarily want to go out and make them angry by shifting policy, but they don't, they certainly don't seem to feel the need to entice them into supporting.

the Trump ticket and the problem with that, like it just puts you in a very weak position because yeah, the alternative is the Democratic party and Joe Biden. And it's not a real alternative for most gun voters because they want more gun bans.

Stephen Gutowski (28:32.53)

any sort of, you know, priorities that the gun rights movement has for sure that they're staunch political opponents at this point. And, you know, it puts you in a position where you have just very little actual political influence over either one of these parties at this point. You're sort of just hoping that Republicans don't change their mind at some point. Because the thing is, too, like if Trump were to change his mind and pursue some sort of

gun restriction, which, and I think this opens the possibility for that because if they're not talking about it now, it's because they think it could hurt them. And while they're ahead now, they don't need to change policy, I think. You they just don't talk about it. But if they start, the tolls start to tighten, which they probably will.

That tends to happen after your convention. Things get a little bit tighter, especially over the last several elections, the polarized nature of our country. You know, what's going to happen if the race gets really close or Trump starts to trail, maybe they have a different candidate at the top of the ticket come, you know, October. And, you know, I think the places that they've removed from the platform or that he didn't mention in his speech.

That feels like the places they might go to try and win over swing voters.

Cam Edwards (29:57.104)

Yeah. So, so it would be interesting because, you know, I can make a counter argument that if things start to go south, if the race starts to tighten up, particularly if the, Biden gets swapped out for, a younger and more coherent, candidate, I

mean, that resets the Trump campaign. You know, they, their, their entire campaign is based on running against Joe Biden, right? So that, that does offer the opportunity for a reset, but I think it also has the potential.

for them to refocus and say, rather than expand that map, right, rather than trying to get 340 electoral college votes, let's focus on 273. I think it becomes much more of a base turnout. I think there's an argument that becomes much more of a base turnout. And that's when you can actually see the campaign go back and start talking to pro -life advocates and saying, all right, listen, we are going to start making some specific amendments to you. Maybe they do say, okay, gun owners, guess what? Yes, right to carry national reciprocity. That is going to be on the table.

Stephen Gutowski (30:39.378)
Interesting,

Cam Edwards (30:54.725)

We'll sign it if we can get to Representative Hudson's bill to my desk. You might start seeing those campaign promises made because it's going to be much more important to get the base, to keep the base excited and to get them to turn out. So, I mean, I don't know which way it's going to go. This is ultimately, you know, those decisions are in the hands of the political consultants, right? But I think in terms of where the American people

Stephen Gutowski (31:08.834)
Good point, good point.

Cam Edwards (31:21.827)

Again, you haven't, I don't know about you, Stephen, none of my friend group, and that would include non -gun owners as well, none of them this week have said, when are we going to ban AR -15s? Like that just doesn't seem to be, at least where I live in rural central Virginia, the reaction that a lot of people have had to this particular act of political violence.

Stephen Gutowski (31:42.078)

Yeah. And an Assaultman's ban has become less popular over the last several years than it was previously, which does make, you know, we're questioning the Trump campaign at this point, but the Biden campaign's focus on it is a bit odd, making that their top gun policy proposal.

Cam Edwards (31:54.192)
And the other thing is too, I mean...

Cam Edwards (31:59.704)

Yeah. Well, and listen, there are a lot of Democrats who saw what happened and said, God, you know, I'm terrified. are the world is just spinning on its axis. I want to get a gun or I maybe it's time for me to get a gun. mean, I've seen and heard Democrats say this this week that I don't like the way the world is going, you know, and maybe some crazy righty decides to go after the left. So I think that that is an aspect of this too, is

you know, going back to the COVID pandemic, we have seen a broadening of who is exercising their second amendment rights. And I think that that has continued. I don't, I don't really like the reason for it, right? The fact that we distrust one another, the fact that we are afraid of what the other side is going to do in retribution. That's not a healthy place for this country to be. But it also does have, I think the, the effect

raising the importance of self -defense and the right to keep their arms, at least to some degree, for some democratic voters. you know, so I think, again, I mean, it's not going to be up to us to decide what the campaign does or what the Trump administration does. I think JD Vance does provide a genuinely pro -Second Amendment viewpoint, much like Mike Pence did.

Stephen Gutowski (33:24.416)

But I would say with JD Vance, only thing, he's probably the most pro -gun thing that happened, I suppose, during this RNC, is that he was the pick for VP, because while his political career has been very short, he was just elected to Senate in 2022, he has been like 100 % record as far as voting for pro -gun.

legislation and voting against gun control legislation and rhetorically he's been very pro-gun since he started running for office at the very least, even advocating for the elimination of the ATF. he's not, it's pretty clear where he is and him being picked is something that the Trump campaign can point to as like a substantial act of...

for the gun rights movement. But I will say like his speech included that aside about his grandmother.

But it wasn't it wasn't any sort of policy promise. Right. It was just a story about which is actually a fairly common story that I hear about older people who own guns just having having them around. The best way to store your firearms if you live alone. You know I've got a loaded gun on my wall right here. I'm not somebody who thinks you have to have your guns locked up at all. It depends on your circumstance. But you know the point of the story was just that his grandmother loved guns because she wanted to protect

family and the Republican party wants to protect people like that. it's not a, we're going to adopt national or a subprosydory or we're going to, you know, reform the regulations of suppressors. Right. and, and the thing about JD Vance is that the reason he's in that position is his political transformation from a never Trump guy to.

Stephen Gutowski (35:23.14)

somebody who now owes his entire career to Donald Trump and were there to ever be some reason that Trump decided to push for new gun restrictions. I just don't see him as a guy who's realistically going to get in the way of that. But that's my reading. I'd be interested in yours. Yeah, true.

Cam Edwards (35:39.729)

I mean, typically your vice presidents don't, right? They find a way to, to, to parrot the party line, but support for the second amendment is so stronger than the Republican party that if Trump actively went against that, if he's turned around and said, yeah, you know what? I we should ban AR-15s. I don't think that you would see a majority of Republican lawmakers fall in line behind that. I certainly don't think you'd see a majority of Republican voters fall in line behind

And I don't think you'd see the NRA, GOA, FPC or any other group come out and say, okay, yeah, actually that's right. I don't think we're going to be in that position. I think we're going to get to that position,

Stephen Gutowski (36:23.818)

Probably not something that that far along, like a total AR ban. But I do think Trump has a lot of ability to move.

Cam Edwards (36:27.929)

Yeah.

Stephen Gutowski (36:32.596)

especially Republican elected officials, maybe a little less so for Republican voters in general. Sometimes they move him, you know, that certainly seems to be the case. yeah, I just like in a scenario where he's president and like if you put a scenario where you have the same makeup of Congress or you have a majority of Republicans or doing a poor job of explaining this, but

take the same bill, same gun restriction bill, and one under President Trump with a Republican controlled Congress. Really, honestly, the make-up of Congress probably doesn't matter much in this scenario. And one's President Trump, one's President Biden, same bill. I think it's more likely to actually pass.

Under our current system with the filibuster in place at the very least, under a president Trump, because he would have more ability to bring Republicans over and Democrats are going to go along with it anyway. Whereas if a Biden pushes the same policy, the exact same policy, whatever it might be, you know, he's going to run into a lot more. It's just naturally going to have more opposition from Republicans at that point.

even if Trump endorsed it off the side where he was, he's not president. Does that make any sense like that? That's one

of the things that I just want to note as a potential, not that it's likely, but this is the risk that you would worry

Cam Edwards (37:53.166)

No, you're right. If Trump were to have a change of heart on a particular issue, maybe it's gun sales to under 21s. You're right. His shift would bring along some Republicans in a way that Joe Biden support for the similar policy or the exact same policy, not going to bring any Republicans along there. Which again is one of the reasons

Stephen Gutowski (38:12.512)

Most likely. I mean, he did with the bipartisan safer communities act thing. There were like 17 Republicans on that, but I'm getting, maybe we're getting too hypothetical. Maybe I'm pushing things too hypothetical. Sure.

Cam Edwards (38:20.376)

Yeah, but I don't think that was because of Biden. I don't think that was because of Biden. But let me just go back and say, mean, this goes back to why I said it's important that Republicans, or excuse me, it's important that Second Amendment advocates don't allow our movement to be completely subsumed by one political party or another. Even though the majority of us may be conservative voters, we may vote Republican, it is a disservice.

to our right to keep and bear arms to attach that right and support for that right to one particular party and to say, you know, that they're going to be our saviors because A, they're not always going to be in power and B, they may not always be as supportive of the second amendment as we would like. Right. So, you know, I've said before that I think it's a mistake for us to expect that the courts are going to save us. We still need to be advocating for our positions and not just any court of law.

And it's a mistake to say that the Republican party is always going to save us because they won't always be in a position to do that. And they may not always have the philosophy that would do that. you know, the second amendment is strongest again, when it is a right of we, the people. And I think we as second amendment supporters need to continue and maybe even need to do a better job of engaging in outreach to places that have not traditionally been our allies. Because if we don't do

If we don't keep this a big tent movement, if we don't try to expand the tent, then at some point I think we could see our rights diminished.

Stephen Gutowski (39:55.572)

Yeah, I think that makes a lot of sense. And I would say just to finish up this concept here, politically right now, would you rather be a union backer or a gun rights advocate after that RNC? Right? Because there was no pro -gun speaker at the RNC. There's certainly not going to be one at the DNC unless there's some wild unexpected thing happens. But there was the Teamsters president at the RNC. He didn't even endorse Donald Trump.

but they gave them a speaking slot there looking for votes from that block, from that issue. And they're certainly gonna get plenty of praise and attention from Democrats when the DNC rolls around. And so that's what I would, when I look at it from the, just from a political standing point of view, that's what really sticks out to me is like, speaks to me as the gun rights movement being in a pretty weak position right now.

Cam Edwards (40:52.81)

You know, again, I think the reason why you saw it is because it is just assumed that gun owners will be with Trump, that second -member supporters will be with Trump. And so I don't necessarily see this position of weakness as just, again, being taken for granted, right? The assumption is that we'll be there. So we don't really need to throw you a bone at the RNC because where are you going to go?

Stephen Gutowski (41:01.246)

Yeah, exactly.

Stephen Gutowski (41:14.41)

But that's what makes it weak to me, right? Because they don't need to try and win these votes because they assume they

have them and the other side's not going to look to try and capture them.

Cam Edwards (41:25.047)

Yeah, I don't know if I see that as though as a sign of weakness necessarily. Because to me, if it was weakness, then you would have seen talk of a red flag law, right? You would have seen something to indicate that your opinions don't matter. And I don't think that was the message to gun owners from the RNC. The message that I got was, we know you're with us already, but we see an opportunity to get some union members who would not be with

Stephen Gutowski (41:30.27)

Just political weakness, that's what I

Cam Edwards (41:52.802)

we see an opportunity to get some suburban moms who would not be with us. I think there's a difference between being taken for granted and being treated with contempt. And I didn't see that.

Stephen Gutowski (42:03.04)

Yeah. Oh, sure. And I don't think they're it's not at the point of political weakness where they're spinning in your face like we don't care. You're going to for us regardless. It's just I still think it's it's weaker than if than in 2016 where they were actively making sure gun at least that NRA supporters were happy. And look, you could still.

They did do that earlier this year. We're not that far away from when they were making promises. It's just, I think, a noticeable shift.

Cam Edwards (42:33.614)

Yeah. Well, and, but think about in 2016 as well, Donald Trump did not have the support within the Republican party that he does today. Right? There were still, I mean, there were a lot of NRA members who were not sold on Donald Trump. NRA came out and endorsed Trump very early, much like the gun control groups came out and endorsed Biden last year over his reelection campaign. And the NRA spent a lot of money supporting Donald

Stephen Gutowski (42:42.816)

Sure.

Cam Edwards (42:57.582)

I'm not suggesting that the NRA bought a seat or bought a space at the podium at the RNC in 2016, but they did. That's probably a topic for all of the conversation is whether or not the NRA's problems have actually contributed to this point where we don't have Randy Kozik at the podium or Doug Hamlin or Bob Barr, I guess, at the RNC.

Stephen Gutowski (43:03.464)

No, but they got a lot of influence from how they supported him. And that's waned, right? Yes.

It does seem like it.

Stephen Gutowski (43:24.34)

They were at a different podium this week because the other issue, they're up in New York in that trial. Although Randy Kozak was at the RNC, just didn't have a speaking slot or even an event. mean, even the most, the biggest gun event they had was hosted by USCCA and it was offsite. But although it did feature Chris LaCivita, LaCivita? I apologize to Chris for getting his name wrong, but.

Cam Edwards (43:27.085)

That's right.

Cam Edwards (43:41.122)

Mm -hmm.

Cam Edwards (43:47.404)

You know, I apologize to Chris if I mispronounced his last name. I pronounce it Lasavita, but who knows? He can always call me Kamid Wards if he wants, I guess.

Stephen Gutowski (43:53.16)

Either way, either way he was at a pro-gun event and he did make promises to appoint that Trump would appoint more pro-gun judges. I don't want to say that they did nothing, but it is, it is an off site event. It wasn't a speaking slot. it, but it is interesting that it was USCC and not the NRA. And I do think that those two.

you know, the scandal and the

influence for gun rights advocates at the RNC are probably connected. But you're right, that's, we'd have to do another 45 minutes on that topic. Maybe we'll have to have you back on after the NRA trial concludes and get your thoughts on that. But I really appreciate you coming on and giving us your insight here. I thought you made a number of really good points that I hadn't considered before as well. that's why we have you on.

Cam Edwards (44:50.702)

Well good, I always love the conversation. You always give me a lot to think about as well. I get to admire that luxurious mop of hair. Wish to myself, God, if I only 30 years younger.

Stephen Gutowski (44:57.674)

Ha ha

Stephen Gutowski (45:01.258)

We're starting to look like the opposite of each other. Cause you've got the long beard on the bottom and I've got the long hair on top of it.

Cam Edwards (45:04.858)

my God, you know, you're right. Right? But I don't even have the little gray on top that I could use as your beard, so.

Stephen Gutowski (45:11.752)

Although that's a very nice smooth cut you've got there. That's quality. All right, well, hey, I appreciate you coming on. Let people know where they can find more of you at Cammon Company and Bearing Arms, how they can sign up and get all your writing and follow your analysis.

Cam Edwards (45:15.822)

Thank you very much. That's a miracle of modern science. The electric head shaver.

Cam Edwards (45:34.69)

Yeah, you bet. Again, just bearingarms.com. You can find the podcast there as well, but we're also on YouTube and Rumble and all the major podcast platforms, Spotify. I am occasionally on Twitter, at camedwards, but most of the time not. So bearingarms.com, that's the best place to find me. And Steven, thanks again for the MW. Man, I always, always enjoy these conversations. This was a really good one. You gave me a lot to think about

Stephen Gutowski (45:58.484)

Hey, same here. Hey, you too. And that's again, why we bring on because you're smart and we also, I think can make diverging points that are both valid. So that's, I think it's a good conversation. Appreciate you coming on. That's it for this week. think we'll give you a little more information about The Dispatch who's sponsoring us once again. And I'll hand it over to myself to make that point.