

00:00:20:02 - 00:00:40:29

Stephen Gutowski

All right, ladies and gentlemen, welcome 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 from a sober, serious perspective that focuses on news and analysis.

00:00:41:05 - 00:01:02:05

Stephen Gutowski

This week we are talking about the NRA, the state of the NRA, the NRA, his most recent board election, the NRA annual meeting coming up, just what in the world is going on over at the NRA? And to do that, we have freelance journalist John Petrolino with us whose writing often appears in Shooting News Weekly and Bearing Arms.

00:01:02:07 - 00:01:05:17

Stephen Gutowski

Thank you so much for joining the show, John. Welcome in.

00:01:05:20 - 00:01:11:02

John Petrolino

Hey, Stephen. Thanks for having me today. It's great to be here. I appreciate you.

00:01:11:04 - 00:01:15:26

Stephen Gutowski

Absolutely. And if you tell people a little bit more about yourself before we get going, just so they know who you are.

00:01:16:03 - 00:01:39:00

John Petrolino

Sure. Yeah. I'm a freelance journalist. For my side hustle. So this is called my side thing. And I kind of stumbled, you know, got out of control rapidly, as these things tend to do. And, I've been covering the Second Amendment since, 2016 was the first time I started to really, look at writing from a journalism standpoint.

00:01:39:02 - 00:02:07:19

John Petrolino

I've been writing for over 25 years. And in 2020 is when things really, you know, took off for me. And I started to really focus on, on this. And, for the last, you know, five plus years have been just hammering down and, you know, I put most of my work out at bearing arms. And then, as you mentioned, shooting news weekly, and I've had stuff and, you know, a bunch of other publications as well.

00:02:07:21 - 00:02:08:08

John Petrolino

So it's.

00:02:08:15 - 00:02:31:29

Stephen Gutowski

It's kind of awesome. And you, you recently. Yeah. Yeah. So you recently wrote, a piece at Bearing Arms that looked at the NRA's election, the board elections. And, you know, this is something where I've, talked about a lot on the show and and at the reload, of the NRA now is through its New York civil trial.

00:02:32:01 - 00:02:54:20

Stephen Gutowski

And there they're done with that. And the key now is where they go from from there. And one of the big things to watch for is that talked about was this election, because you had I was at a board meeting that, one goes, a couple board meetings go and did the reformer group or whatever you want to call it, they call themselves NRA 2.0.

00;02;54;23 - 00;03;25;06

Stephen Gutowski

Had a majority on the board, this 76 person board, but they didn't have enough of a majority, a large enough majority to actually, implement the reforms that they wanted to do at that meeting. And they ran into some significant resistance from, other board members. A lot of former up here, associates, defenders, people who, you know, are still, in his corner, so to speak.

00;03;25;08 - 00;03;55;08

Stephen Gutowski

And, so this election, I think, was going to be key to see which direction the NRA might go if they were going to go further into the reformer realm, or they were going to, you know, keep the status quo more or less. And, so what what actually happened? You wrote a great piece that detailed how the results turned out and, yeah, I this is not something that I was has kept covered very closely.

00;03;55;08 - 00;04;00;19

Stephen Gutowski

So that's why I wanted to have you on. And talk about it. What, what what occurred on the in this election.

00;04;00;22 - 00;04;23;26

John Petrolino

So I think and this is something you and I talked about in the back end. And, what's really interesting about the NRA board election and in particular as of late, is people are paying attention to it, as in people who are interested. Now, I think there's a couple elephants in the room that cannot be ignored. You know, the NRA has lost membership.

00;04;23;26 - 00;04;57;17

John Petrolino

They've admitted that they've lost membership. The last number that I got on members from an official right, that was able to comment on it was in February. So February, I had, I had, interviewed Doug Hamlin, and Hamlin said that their numbers were just under 4 million. Now, he didn't give me an official number. And then there's also other unsubstantiated rumors that, you know, there's membership numbers are still dropping, but I haven't confirmed any of that.

00;04;57;17 - 00;05;11;20

John Petrolino

So the only thing that I have to work off of is what he said. So there is a drop in membership, which is definitely an issue. And then of the members that the NRA has, we have to take into consideration.

00;05;11;20 - 00;05;12;27

Stephen Gutowski

Well, actually, just real quick.

00;05;12;27 - 00;05;13;29

John Petrolino

Go ahead.

00;05;14;01 - 00;05;50;20

Stephen Gutowski

Real quick on the membership numbers. By the way, Doug Hamlin, for anyone who doesn't know, is is the current executive vice president of the NRA. He took over after Wayne Lapierre resigned. But, so obviously a pretty good source. They're on to how many, members they have. But, at the same time, Bob Barr, who's the president of the NRA, sent out a memo to board members, recently that claimed, they'd seen, significant drop in lifetime members and, you know, he gave a percentage drop.

00;05;50;20 - 00;06;00;22

Stephen Gutowski

So, you could kind of calculate the number of lifetime members that were left from that. And then the NRA and this kind of speculation that you're getting it right.

00;06;00;22 - 00;06;01;01

John Petrolino

Yeah.

00;06;01;01 - 00;06;24;23

Stephen Gutowski

I actually a blog that's followed this, they said that, if you one of the other ways to kind of estimate how many NRA members there are is through the, the subscriptions and their magazines, because every membership comes with a subscription to the magazine. And so, you know, if you put those two numbers together that are in danger, at least estimated there, there are somewhere around 3 million members.

00;06;24;23 - 00;06;30;06

Stephen Gutowski

So. Well, it's we got somewhere between 3 and 4, I think is fair to say. Yeah.

00;06;30;08 - 00;06;51;03

John Petrolino

And and again, you know, I had read about the, the Bob Barr memo. I hadn't dug into it. I hadn't gotten an official position from anyone on it. So I'm not saying I'm discredited. I didn't discredit I mean, he's the president of the NRA, which I think is important to work like. So into the weeds on this.

00;06;51;03 - 00;07;16;24

John Petrolino

It's important for people to understand how the structure works. So we talked about Doug Hamlin being the CEO and executive vice president of the NRA. And that's, somebody that works for the NRA. It's a paid position. And he serves at the pleasure of the NRA body. So the NRA board is the ones that hire and elect the executive vice president.

00;07;16;24 - 00;07;39;24

John Petrolino

Previous to this, there was changes that were made previously. Members actually would vote on that as well. So you have hired, you know, employees, which is where Doug Hamlin would be. And then you have board members and officers, which is over here. Now the board members in the office are. So Bob Barr is a board member who was elected to be an officer of the board.

00;07;39;24 - 00;08;03;24

John Petrolino

So he is now the president of the NRA. So that is not a paid position. These guys don't get paid. NRA board members don't get paid. NRA employees do get paid. So you are right there. You have a board that's supposed to regulate how the employees work. And then the employees are also supposed to be able to go to the board and say, hey, these are things that we need that we might not be able to have.

00;08;03;24 - 00;08;28;02

John Petrolino

So just so people understand what's going on. So hearing this from Bob Barr isn't nothing. It's something he's the president of the board of the NRA. But we also haven't gotten anything substantiated from the employees of the NRA. And I don't know the process over on the, you know, information like, where did Bob get his information? I don't know, I didn't ask him.

00;08;28;04 - 00;08;31;21

John Petrolino

I certainly could, but yeah, and I'm not saying that that's.

00;08;31;21 - 00;08;32;21

Stephen Gutowski

A fair that's a fair point.

00;08;32;21 - 00;08;34;12

John Petrolino

Yeah. So yeah.

00;08;34;14 - 00;09;06;06

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah, certainly I'm you know, the lower estimate is we don't know for sure how many members of are but, you know, clearly there's a lot fewer than there were a couple of years ago. And I think somewhere between 3 and 4 we've had reporting, in the past, that was 3.8. So, you know, bottom line, I think for this, what really matters beyond just the state of the NRA and obviously they get their money from dues payments from these members.

00;09;06;06 - 00;09;24;19

Stephen Gutowski

That's where most of their revenue comes from. So it matters for that reason, too, and also for their political, power, because they represent the right people. The more people they represent, the more power they have. But it also matters to the elections because, one not all these people get to vote in the election. Not even not all members vote in the election.

00;09;24;19 - 00;09;34;28

Stephen Gutowski

So not not all members are eligible to vote in the elections. And so, it's only life members and those with five, you're in a know have five year memberships, right.

00;09;35;01 - 00;09;44;12

John Petrolino

It has to be the full five consecutive years. You can't just get a five year membership. Right. You're good to go. You could get a lifetime membership, and you're supposed to go, so there's a lot of new.

00;09;44;12 - 00;10;10;03

Stephen Gutowski

So it's really limited the pool. Yeah, but it's really limited the pool of who can vote in these elections. And maybe that's you kind of mentioned earlier that like these elections, these board elections, you know, and in my experience, they weren't really very much like elections in the past, in the sense that, like, a lot of people got elected because they had been on the board for a while.

00;10;10;05 - 00;10;31;12

Stephen Gutowski

They're known quantities, they know names they have. The more you had a lot of celebrities on the board, and you didn't really see them running, like your traditional kind of political campaign to get on the board. Until this corruption scandal happened and now you've had a lot more of people running on actual platforms and what they want to do for the NRA.

00;10;31;12 - 00;10;45;04

Stephen Gutowski

And and you've had two different groups come up. You covered this in your piece, the NRA 2.0 or the reformers and the, strong NRA or the more, oh, old guard, I don't know why you how you.

00;10;45;06 - 00;10;46;00

John Petrolino

Yes.

00;10;46;02 - 00;10;55;00

Stephen Gutowski

But you had these two factions running in that, that what was the outcome of that, I guess, who which side did better in this?

00;10;55;02 - 00;10;55;22

John Petrolino

It's pretty.

00;10;55;22 - 00;10;56;23

Stephen Gutowski

Interesting election.

00;10;57;01 - 00;11;25;17

John Petrolino

It's pretty interesting about the election. And I think the biggest takeaway that I got and then I spoke to some people in background about this as well. Right. And the biggest takeaway that really shook me was if you were not affiliated with either strong NRA, which is the we'll call it Old Guard or NRA 2.0, which we're referring colloquially to as the reformers.

00;11;25;19 - 00;11;52;17

John Petrolino

You didn't get elected or reelected, only people who were affiliated with them, for lack of a better term, a party. And I don't know how else to describe it, a camp, maybe. So it's become somewhat of a politicized thing. And so if you didn't if you didn't have an affiliation, you weren't getting elected or reelected. And looking at, you know, some of the results here.

00;11;52;19 - 00;12;14;20

John Petrolino

And I don't know if the results that I got from American Rifleman, if they were ranked as in the number of votes, but if they were the only unaffiliated person that came up close would be Jean Roche. Underneath the strong NRA candidate that didn't get elected. So these were all people that are now eligible for the 76 director.

00;12;14;20 - 00;12;44;10

John Petrolino

But of the candidates that that were running, I want to say pretty much we can say NRA 2.0 kind of swept the election. And I've got the hard numbers here. I'll look at them. So there were 16 old guard or strong NRA candidates and ten of them won right. Either were elected or reelected. Then there were 28 NRA 2.0 candidates and 19 won.

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John Petrolino

So if you look at the percentages, 66% of the ballot was taken by NRA 2.0 and 34% was taken by strong NRA. So there's a clear decisive amount of, you know, power and and faith being put into what we're calling NRA 2.0 now. And I and I think that that's something that is, is good in the sense of people are paying attention.

00;13;19;22 - 00;13;43;19

John Petrolino

But now they're engaged. You know, it looks like people are getting more engaged now. If there were some upsets or I'd say things that were shocks that were shocking, you and I kind of talked about we were shocked, you know, longtime board member Tom King, who is the president, I believe, a New York State Rifle Pistol Association, which is nice surp

of.

00;13;43;19 - 00;13;53;22

John Petrolino

Yeah. For the Bruin case, Tom King did not reelected and he's like a long term, long time board member for a lot of years. And,

00;13;53;24 - 00;14;14;08

Stephen Gutowski

It that's actually very fascinating to me because Tom King, not only was the is the head of the the state group that won Bruin, you know, the major Second Amendment, landmark case, the Supreme Court, but also he's been on the board for a very long time. He's I believe he's on the foundation's board as well.

00;14;14;14 - 00;14;28;04

Stephen Gutowski

And he's a very vocal board member. And I kind of wonder if that's why he didn't get reelected because of the he's vocal in defending Wayne Lapierre through all of this. Well, he.

00;14;28;04 - 00;14;29;26

John Petrolino

Ran I think that defense.

00;14;29;29 - 00;14;38;12

Stephen Gutowski

Get up and defend Lapierre at like the members meetings and very, very harsh terms towards his critics.

00;14;38;15 - 00;14;57;08

John Petrolino

And from what I understand, that defense went all the way up until the point where he had to testify in court. So I spoke to Mr. King in January, and he's like, well, when I found out about everything. And then, you know, that all came out in the court case. I said, okay, so that came out in the court case.

00;14;57;08 - 00;15;20;24

John Petrolino

And then then he testified, but he hadn't said anything that I could see, contrary to, to Wayne up until then. And so, you know, he spoke about that too. But I think some of the other things that also were flags on the play were and I talked to Mr. King about this as well, were comments that were made in a chat thread.

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John Petrolino

And you and I kind of talked about this when there was, a Facebook group that was opened up there that was a pro, for lack of a better term of pro reform. It's not these reformers, but it was just another group on social media, a private group of people that are coming together that want to discuss NRA issues from the vantage point of, you know, they're not happy with Wayne or, you know, how things are going under Wayne's leadership.

00;15;48;00 - 00;16;13;12

John Petrolino

And Willis Lee, who is a board member now, he was reelected, I believe he was running as a reform candidate, as an NRA to point out. And that's a whole nother issue and a whole different story. What went down, what Willis Lee, and there's a whole lot there that I don't know what happened years ago because he was on track to be the president of NRA and got outed, oh, by the board.

00;16;13;12 - 00;16;15;25

John Petrolino

So I don't know the details of that, but yeah.

00;16;15;26 - 00;16;22;04

Stephen Gutowski

And this has become warmer since then. Or prominent member of the.

00;16;22;06 - 00;16;54;07

John Petrolino

Yeah. So this chat thread that was was going on, they were talking about people engaging privately or, you know, in a semipublic forum discussing this and very flippantly and openly saying, you know, we need to reconsider maybe people's committee positions and things like that because they're affiliating themselves with people who are open to discourse and conversation. And Tom King made some interesting comments there about neutralizing the people who were involved in that.

00;16;54;07 - 00;17;13;10

John Petrolino

And I asked him about that, and he didn't really give me a very good answer, in my opinion. And that coverage is over at bearing arms and that shooting newsweekly. But the thing about the, the upset and I don't know, I don't know, upset is the right word because I don't have a horse in the race per se.

00;17;13;12 - 00;17;42;14

John Petrolino

Is it was interesting that he did not get reelected. And then his public commentary about his not election. He made a public commentary on social media. So I don't feel bad about reporting. All this is saying, you know, there's a whole group of, bloggers and podcasters who are just spreading lies and, you know, defaming, you know, the NRA and for lack of a better term, the old guard.

00;17;42;14 - 00;18;02;19

John Petrolino

And that's fine and dandy. But, you know, I'm a show me the money kind of guy. Like, if there was all of this defamation and all these lies or whatever were being said, call them out. And then, you know, you have redress, you know, go after it. So, I think he was shocked at it and and get reelected.

00;18;02;21 - 00;18;31;24

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. And look, it's, that's that's the kind of rhetoric that you've seen from from, many of the law piers associates and defenders on the board, for years now. And it's just interesting to see somebody as prominent in that role as Tom King lose reelection after a very long time on the board. And, you know, it's just given the breakdown that you you gave us there on the, you know, the what the at least in this election.

00;18;31;24 - 00;19;07;21

Stephen Gutowski

Look, not every board member is up every year, so this isn't they're only up every three years. They serve three year terms. So it's only one third of the board that's been refreshed here. So it's not as though it's going to be a 60%, NRA 2.0 board. But, you know, seeing them do very well and even very prominent members of the, the old, old guard, strong and array, I guess party, like you said, it's it's weird is weird to see them kind of divide into parties on the board now, but, that's certainly a very new thing.

00;19;07;21 - 00;19;20;12

Stephen Gutowski

But, you know, it's to see that it's very emblematic of what I think NRA members seem to want, which is significant change, because that's what the 2.0 people are promising. Right?

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John Petrolino

Yeah. And and I think again, there's a lot of elements to this, machine because it really is a machine. We're talking about employees and board and how they interact. And then the NRA, if you want to look at as a, a collection of corporations, because you have the NRA, you have the NRA, like you have all of like the friends of the NRA.

00;19;45;13 - 00;20;26;00

John Petrolino

You have a lot going on, and it's huge. You've got, I think, five magazines that they're also running. So five editorial staffs, plus they're online, you know, news. So they do a lot. And so trying to wrangle all of that and every piece there I think is going to be the big challenge going forward. And I know they had to cut back on their staff tremendously in the past when they were having, more acute financial issues and, going back again to talking to Doug Hamlin in February.

00;20;26;03 - 00;20;55;01

John Petrolino

He I think they are slated to hire 20 more employees to try to help. And I don't know in what exact capacity or whatever, but 20 more employees to the NRA, which is a good sign because it's showing that, hey, they're seeing some of that liquidity that maybe, hey, we can afford to have 20 more staffers. And then, of course, the assumption is they're going to be helping to advance forward and progress.

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John Petrolino

And I think it's also important to recognize that Hamlin was elected basically as kind of a more pro reform candidate, you know, when when he was tapped to do this and what's really great about Mr. Hamlin is, you know, his background is in journalism and in publishing. So he's got, a very different view of things. And, what I also like about him is he's put himself very forward and out there.

00;21;30;08 - 00;21;51;16

John Petrolino

So, friends of the NRA, dinners, he'll go to those that are being hosted around the country. I think he was at the the largest one. And I don't hold my feet to the fire on this because I read so much. It's hard to follow. But I think the largest NRA dinner is in, somewhere out in the Midwest.

00;21;51;16 - 00;22;18;01

John Petrolino

It might be might be Indiana. I'm not really sure it I think they get around a thousand people to show up to the dinner, which is, a tremendous dinner. He came out to that dinner. I, I ran into him at the Liberty Bell dinner and Philadelphia, there's a gun owners Action League so that Owners Action League is the Massachusetts state affiliate.

00;22;18;03 - 00;22;41;26

John Petrolino

NRA, you know, club, they're having an event on, April 19th. So that event, he's scheduled to be at that event to participate there. And, you know, at that event, there's also going to be Adam Trout from Second Amendment Foundation Camp Edwards, who's a fellow board member on the Citizens Committee, and, you know, an editor of Bearing Arms.

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John Petrolino

So what I'm seeing is there's been a more push for the leadership to be public. And I think this ties into, of course, the successes that the board's going to have now. I think the NRA annual meeting itself is going to yield some interesting results as well. Because we don't know what's going to happen. Procedural procedurally, you'll know before I will.

00;23;06;20 - 00;23;13;05

John Petrolino

Yeah. We're going to be there on the ground. You know. So I think it's there's a lot of moving parts the meeting.

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Stephen Gutowski

But yeah for sure I mean, you know, like you said though, there's certainly the I think the reformers, the NRA 2.0, group and the NRA writ large recognize their problems. You know, they're they're very significant problems. You know, as you said, trying to re hire some people to try and make programs more robust to service members.

00;23;40;14 - 00;24;02;06

Stephen Gutowski

Is is a potentially positive step if that's if that does happen. And then obviously they I think they very much recognize their membership problem. They want they're trying to reverse it. They believe they have a big sale actually, right now on on lifetime memberships. And I'm sure they'll have a sale at the annual meeting as well in Atlanta next weekend.

00;24;02;09 - 00;24;38;11

Stephen Gutowski

But, you know, it's it's they are faced with, serious challenges. You know, it appears from the election results that you outlined there that the reformers are going to have a more substantial control over the future of the NRA, and that they'll be able to perhaps pursue a number of these reforms that they want. And the you know, the question I think that's left is whether that's going to be enough or whether that's going to happen fast enough to pull them out of this tailspin that they're in because, you know, they're facing new challenges.

00;24;38;11 - 00;25;00;16

Stephen Gutowski

You know, they just finished the the New York civil trial is now at an end. You know, there's some there were some reforms that were implemented as part of that, both by the NRA and by the court. But they're past that. And you now have what appears to be a more unified board under this new, reformer agenda, the NRA 2.0 agenda.

00;25;00;16 - 00;25;31;20

Stephen Gutowski

So they have perhaps more unity and moving forward, more, ability to enact some stuff they want to do that they're hoping will convince people to come back. But at the same time, they have lost a lot of members, as we mentioned, millions of members. And they also have, lost, it appears, some trust in from Donald Trump, who is now, for the first time in a decade, not going to speak at the annual meeting.

00;25;31;23 - 00;25;59;08

Stephen Gutowski

That's a pretty big blow to them politically, I think. And then also, they face several more legal threats. So Oliver North, the former president, who was pushed out by Wayne Lapierre when they when this corruption scandal first broke into public view, he's suing them again. And then David Della Koya is has just had some success in his class action lawsuit.

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Stephen Gutowski

This is, a former NRA donor who's filed a class action suit, on behalf of other NRA donors who feel they were misled about their donations because they went to at least some part of them, went to paying what appears personal expenses rather than to the, the ends of the especially the NRA Foundation. He just got a ruling from a federal judge that said his suit can move forward on all claims, including even Rico claims.

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Stephen Gutowski

So that's a pretty, pretty significant challenge they're going to have to face here. And so I guess the question is, right, whether they can actually convince people to come back fast enough to stop the, the bleeding, first of all, and then to, move things back in a positive direction for the organization where it can become, you know, more, like recapture some of the power and that it had, you know, before all this happened.

00;27;06;16 - 00;27;07;29

Stephen Gutowski

What's your thoughts on that?

00;27;07;29 - 00;27;30;10

John Petrolino

Yeah. No, I don't think that it is a very big burden to carry. And there is a lot still going on, so we can't say, oh, the NRA is completely out of the woods. Like, at the end of the day, this is a membership thing, a membership numbers thing. It's a donors thing. So if they can't pull in the money, obviously they're not going to be solvent.

00;27;30;13 - 00;27;49;02

John Petrolino

And then when we look at the membership numbers and, you know, going back to what Mr. Barr was saying about life members, when we look at the membership numbers, if you're having mostly life members, that that means that's usually a force that's turned off, you know. So if you're not a yeah, annual member, that's not a trickle that's coming in.

00;27;49;02 - 00;28;18;03

John Petrolino

So there's that, you know, challenges as well. The other lawsuits, it sounds to me like a lot of this stuff will resolve itself probably in a hopefully in a, in a, in a good way for the NRA in a sense of that. It helps again, push change forward. Rather than being, you know, some sort of a financial burden, because I think at this point, I think everybody sees that, you know.

00;28;18;05 - 00;28;40;24

Stephen Gutowski

Has has said, on that point, Delaware has said that he'd be happy to settle with the NRA. And he claims that he mainly wants reforms over money, from the organization, like he has an idea for, he wants the board to be turned into an advisory board, and then an executive board would be appointed a much that's much smaller, you know, 6 to 12 people.

00;28;40;24 - 00;29;04;17

Stephen Gutowski

I think he's talked about, and then a number of other transparency changes, you know, making information available to the members and more accessible way, especially through the internet. And so, you know, you may be right that that I suppose it could and that is in line with some of what the reformers want. Right? They they've all talked about wanting a smaller.

00;29;04;17 - 00;29;05;23

John Petrolino

Board for.

00;29;05;23 - 00;29;08;08

Stephen Gutowski

One. So maybe that could result.

00;29;08;08 - 00;29;38;19

John Petrolino

In, I think, a 76 member board of directors is really a lot to manage. And, you know, if that was more of a committee head type of thing or like you said, advisory role or whatever, where you're still having the, you know, the title, but maybe with a little bit more of the control being a little bit more concentrated in a smaller board, because then you can actually have meaningful discourse.

00;29;38;19 - 00;29;50;15

John Petrolino

You've got 76 directors and you've got, you know, 3.5 million members, 3 to 4 million members, whatever. That's a lot

to manage. So, yeah, I think those are and that's.

00:29:50:15 - 00:29:52:06

Stephen Gutowski

Been a long running critique.

00:29:52:08 - 00:29:53:13

John Petrolino

Yeah. What's that?

00:29:53:13 - 00:30:17:09

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. And and, that's been a long running critique. And they, I guess the ultimate question, I think Delaware told me this when I spoke to him, the other day, he's skeptical that people are going to vote away their own jobs, I guess. So we'll have to see what comes of that. But but it does feel like an area where he and the reformers want the same thing.

00:30:17:09 - 00:30:24:29

Stephen Gutowski

And so, as you mentioned, maybe, maybe that suit could get resolved, in a way that doesn't drag out for another five, six.

00:30:24:29 - 00:30:50:17

John Petrolino

Years for sure. Yeah. So I think the NRA is clearly working, from what I can see, from what I've seen and what I've the people that I've spoke to, and I think I want to make it clear here, like, I don't, I don't have a beef with anyone. Right. So, you know, looking at this election was a very difficult thing to look at.

00:30:50:17 - 00:31:16:04

John Petrolino

And outside of one other NRA board election from a couple of years ago, that was the one that I think I was talking to you about. Will be having the change up in, the officer position with that line getting disrupted. I haven't really covered much of these board elections because I saw how contentious they were, and I didn't really feel as well informed on them.

00:31:16:04 - 00:31:44:22

John Petrolino

So with this particular election, as you pointed out, like, hey, this was clearly different. So he said, well, let me pay a little bit more attention. So I spoke to strong, you know, NRA candidates. I spoke to NRA 2.0 candidates. And as far as the election goes, talked to those camps, talk to other members. And then from not related to the election level.

00:31:44:22 - 00:32:05:04

John Petrolino

It's also inter interacting with the NRA itself, who's like 100 times more accessible now than they were when Wayne was, you know, in charge or even that interim period when and Arundel, was in charge, you know, so right there accessible. So yeah.

00:32:05:04 - 00:32:37:27

Stephen Gutowski

Absolutely. And they're having there have been changes on that front for sure. Speaking of strong and it's you spoke to some of these guys, I've read their website. And the honestly, the website, they don't seem like there's that much like they talk about being open to reforms and transparency as well. You know, how do you think some of their even these, board members who've been on, on their for a long time through this whole scandal as well, are maybe changing their minds too, about what is needed to, you know, bring the NRA back from the brink.

00;32;37;29 - 00;33;11;26

John Petrolino

I can't speculate on what somebody is or isn't thinking. And I haven't had any conversations with anyone either to be able to substantiate that. But strictly my own opinion, my own opinion is I think you're going to find a lot more unity, going forward. I think that's also the hope. I think the hope with many of the board members is to find a more middle ground, or at least having people that are opposing now, the majority coming closer to the middle on a lot of these issues.

00;33;11;28 - 00;33;52;28

John Petrolino

Because let's not forget, some of these old guard members voted for things like moving the NRA. They voted for they were looking to do the, you know, bankruptcy or they were at least privy to that. So there were some interesting things that people are talking about, but some of the other board members that maybe have been there for a really long time that are affiliated as old guard or strong NRA board members, I think we're I think we're going to find some of them having more conversations with NRA to point out in a more meaningful way and less divisive, you know, and I think that's the direction I mean, that they're going to

00;33;52;28 - 00;34;13;09

John Petrolino

be going it. There's nothing wrong with, you know, the board members, these are the people that were elected. And, you know, yeah, you're going to have people that are bad apples or whatever, but inherently you have two different camps or two different ideologies. And I think the prevailing ideology is going to be to point out, you know, and I think that's.

00;34;13;11 - 00;34;37;03

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah, I mean, certainly that makes some sense because because, you know, the, the NRA 2.0 people, they managed to get a majority of the board after really only electing four members down the last election. Right? So they've managed to convince a lot of people who were already on the board to, you know, come there, come around to their point of view.

00;34;37;05 - 00;34;55;04

Stephen Gutowski

But, you so you spoke with some of the strong NRA candidates. What? Yeah. You mentioned there being sort of two different ideologies behind these groups. What how would you describe the was there like a through a through point? Was there a theme to what most of the strong NRA candidates were talking about, what they want to see.

00;34;55;07 - 00;35;28;07

John Petrolino

The only actual policy conversation, because I also had quick hellos. How are you as kind of conversations with some of the other strong NRA members? We didn't dive into things, they, you know, some of them commented that my coverage was fair, on, on the election, which makes me feel good because, I was afraid going into this, talking about both of these bases, that somebody would you know, start saying, I'm shilling for one group or the other or whatever.

00;35;28;07 - 00;36;02;14

John Petrolino

That's not what the intention was. The intention was to give people information. Tom King again, he didn't get reelected. If I had to guess, Tom King is probably going to be the, maybe the director that gets, you know, pushed forward for people to support for 76 director from if there's still going to be decisiveness here, if there's still going to be a divided board on this, I would I would prefer to say that Tom King is going to probably try to run for that 76 director chair.

00;36;02;14 - 00;36;08;23

John Petrolino

I don't know anything. I don't have any facts. I haven't had any conversations with anyone. Well, and then.

00;36;08;23 - 00;36;12;02

Stephen Gutowski

So the reason I ask, about the strong NRA.

00;36;12;02 - 00;36;13;02

John Petrolino

Right.

00;36;13;05 - 00;36;32;08

Stephen Gutowski

There, their, their basic, ideology or their, their point of view is like when I looked at their website, I mean, a lot of a lot of the points they make sound, at least on surface, they're all pretty similar to the NRA 2.0 people. They want more transparency. Say they want a strong yes or no. You're right. Yeah.

00;36;32;10 - 00;36;38;04

Stephen Gutowski

I was just wondering if he's noticed, like a significant difference in what they're actually.

00;36;38;06 - 00;37;04;22

John Petrolino

From was the only place I spoke to on policy. So it might not be a good barometer. Right. You know, Mr. Barr sent me some statements. President Barr sent me some statements, and they were kind of just, on point with, you know, yes, we want a strong NRA just as a statement. Right. Tom King, when he and I spoke, I asked him specifically, you know, what are they going to do different?

00;37;04;22 - 00;37;24;15

John Petrolino

Is there anything that and after the lawsuits, after all of the shake ups, all of these things going on, I said, you know, what are you going to do that's different from what you have been doing? And his answer was nothing. So I'm like, well, what do you mean you're not going to do anything different? So that might maybe that's maybe that's more of a status quo, you know.

00;37;24;15 - 00;37;34;21

John Petrolino

So I but I can't he can't necessarily speak for the entire slate of candidates. But that's the only what I should do. Policy.

00;37;34;23 - 00;37;51;25

Stephen Gutowski

I don't know. When I looked at their website, didn't see anything specific either, to be honest. And I, you know, it doesn't make sense to me. The status quo is kind of what the old guard is. The the, I don't know if that's derogatory or not or how they feel about being called that way term, but.

00;37;51;25 - 00;37;55;08

John Petrolino

Yeah, there's other times I just tossed around. Right. So.

00;37;55;11 - 00;38;22;07

Stephen Gutowski

Well, sure, people some people call them the cabal, which is obviously a much more negative, intentionally negative, term for it, but but yeah, just basically the I mean, that's what a lot of the, the board members who have been opposed to the reformers or the NRA 2.0, party, I guess is what if the group, you know, they basically said there isn't these problems are not real.

00;38;22;07 - 00;38;57;22

Stephen Gutowski

They're made up by right, the enemies of the NRA. You know, this has been the common theme for years now. So, you know, I don't I, you know, I would assume voting for the that segment of the board is voting to say things are okay at the NRA or that they're not the fault of the NRA. The problems that the group has had, it's been more the the message that they're they're being targeted politically by, you know, gun control advocates or by people in the gun rights movement that don't like the NRA.

00;38;57;23 - 00;39;24;04

Stephen Gutowski

You know, that's been their lines essentially. So I guess it's not serious, but but it is. I just thought the the strong NRA website was kind of interesting because it kind of on the surface, it's pretty similar in nature to what the NRA 2.0 people have been saying. Not necessarily in the details of what they would do, but messaging wise, the I was interested to see that and that they even formed like a whole other group because that really wasn't a thing.

00;39;24;06 - 00;39;25;19

Stephen Gutowski

Four of us just now.

00;39;25;19 - 00;39;27;03

John Petrolino

So, there was.

00;39;27;05 - 00;39;44;01

Stephen Gutowski

You know, people who were on the board and then people who wanted to be on the board to change how the board works. And, now they've, as you said, they've kind of moved forward into like a party system, almost. So that's kind of fascinating. Yes. But, yeah. So I.

00;39;44;01 - 00;39;46;00

John Petrolino

Guess what? Annual meeting. Yeah. Yeah. What do you.

00;39;46;01 - 00;39;55;14

Stephen Gutowski

What are you going to be looking for? What are you going to look for personally out of this meeting, out of like, what do you want to what are the signs you think people should look for as to what direction the NRA is going to be?

00;39;55;19 - 00;40;24;21

John Petrolino

I think we we want to see what happens in way of the 76th director. I think that's going to be another meaningful and also how that is handled. You know who's lobbying for who or whatever. I think that's going to be interesting. As well as what happens at the actual meeting. And, how business gets conducted, I think that's going to be a good, maybe bellwether on how things are going to be going forward.

00;40;24;21 - 00;40;26;25

John Petrolino

We'll see.

00;40;26;28 - 00;40;32;20

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. So like, you know, just people being able to go up and speak and not getting

00;40;32;22 - 00;40;34;22

John Petrolino

I don't think people will get.

00:40:34;24 - 00:40:35;23

Stephen Gutowski

Shouted down or anything.

00:40:35;26 - 00:40:38;10

John Petrolino

Yeah. I mean, I don't think people that's having a.

00:40:38;10 - 00:40:49;20

Stephen Gutowski

Lot of these other meetings, they've got to shut down, attempts at people to come up and criticize what's going on at the NRA. Yeah. Well, are there any, policy things you're looking for?

00:40:49;22 - 00:41;12;08

John Petrolino

Policy things that'll be surprising? From what I can see, they seem to be already implementing a lot of because going back to last year. So I think it's just going to be a continuous snap mission. Right. I don't think we're going to see the board come together and say, oh, we need a smaller board. Now. I don't think that's something that I think that would be more if that is a goal, which I don't know if it is.

00:41;12;08 - 00:41;29;03

John Petrolino

It has been talked about like you said, that's going to be more of a mid-level goal. That's not a short term goal. That's because there's a lot of work that needs to get done to get to that point. And then again, you know, it's like having Congress agree to, you know, doing term limits, you know, voting themselves out of a job.

00:41;29;03 - 00:41;41;26

John Petrolino

So at the end of the day, the folks that are doing this for the Second Amendment, I think are the ones that, will probably prevail because they're going to remove self-interest, you know?

00:41;41;29 - 00:41;53;11

Stephen Gutowski

Okay. So, yeah, I guess they're we look for at the immediate thing in the this meeting coming up next weekend. How how it goes procedurally, whether they go down or.

00:41;53;11 - 00:41;53;18

John Petrolino

Like.

00:41;53;18 - 00:41;55;17

Stephen Gutowski

Exactly. Right. Stuff like that.

00:41;55;19 - 00:41;56;13

John Petrolino

There was some other.

00:41;56;13 - 00:41;57;29

Stephen Gutowski

That'll be a difference.

00:41:58;01 - 00:42:24;06

John Petrolino

Other weird things. And I know we're wrapping up here real quick. So I know we're short on time, but, there was also that random letter and I pulled it off the internet, and I haven't confirmed its validity, but there was a letter about Marion Hammer being expelled from the NRA. And she it's alleged that she got this letter that there's an ethics committee being pushed against her.

00:42:24;06 - 00:42:43;25

John Petrolino

And that was posted at a very public forum. I haven't confirmed its existence, nor have I dug into it, but it's something from what I can see. Looks like it was valid. That what that's all about? I don't know. So I'm interested to see if that comes up in the meeting as well.

00:42:43;27 - 00:42:58;14

Stephen Gutowski

Yeah. And then long term we look to see whether some of these bigger reforms like shrinking the board are actually implemented, I guess, to just to try and not for whether you're, I think they should be done, but just a sign of which way the right. Yeah.

00:42:58;20 - 00:43:14;19

John Petrolino

And I think that's a sign. Exactly. And like I said you know, I want to see the NRA just succeed. You know, the horse in the race is, you know, just harmony, like, let them do what they need to do, right? You know, so we'll say.

00:43:14;22 - 00:43:23;06

Stephen Gutowski

All right, well, look, we appreciate you joining the show and giving us, your insight here. If people want to hear more from you and follow your reporting, where can they do that?

00:43:23;09 - 00:43:42;01

John Petrolino

My personal website is thepenpatriot.com. I put a lot of my work over out at Bearing Arms. Like I said, you can find me on Facebook. My page for that is The Pen Patriot as well. And. But if you go to the website, you can catch me there. And if you want to email me, you can email me john@thepenpatriot.com.

00:43:42;01 - 00:43:51;12

John Petrolino

And I'm always looking for news tips. I'm always looking for, you know, things to talk about and stuff like that. So, that's where you can find me.

00:43:51;14 - 00:44:08;20

Stephen Gutowski

All right. Wonderful. That's all we've got for you guys this week. You can, also head over to thereload.com and pick up a membership to today if you want to keep up to date with what's going on with guns in and support, the reporting that we do here at the reload is how we fund our operation.

00:44:08;20 - 00:44:17;19

Stephen Gutowski

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