



NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION, INC.

FLINTLOCK RIDGE OFFICE CENTER • 11 MILE HILL ROAD • NEWTOWN, CT 06470-2359
TEL (203) 426-1320 • FAX (203) 426-1245 • www.nssf.org

Fact Sheet: American Hunters and Shooters Association “Restoring Pride in America’s Hunting and Shooting Heritage”?

“Restoring pride in America’s hunting and shooting heritage.” That’s the mission of a new organization, the American Hunters and Shooters Association (AHSA). And while this mission is hardly offensive or even suspicious, the make-up of this organization is nothing short of alarming. Just last week (August 23, 2006) the President of the AHSA Foundation, John Rosenthal, blasted Massachusetts gun maker Smith & Wesson for advertising during New England Patriots football games. The ads promote gun safety and the company's Web site. Why the hysteria? Does the President of the AHSA Foundation believe that firearms are **not** legitimate products?

This most recent suspicious act by AHSA, along with the organization’s contention that pride in America’s hunting and shooting heritage *needs* to be “restored,” merits further examination of the group. The following fact sheet should serve as an educational tool to raise awareness of AHSA’s services and leadership, demonstrating that AHSA is actually the latest in a long line of anti-gun groups camouflaging themselves as pro-hunting and pro-conservation in order to split our community. Before you give AHSA any creed – beware the wolf in sheep’s clothing, and see for yourself:

Services

General Operations

Reported in an article by Bill Schneiderⁱ that the operating budget for AHSA is \$500,000. Where did this money come from? With only a handful of members (paying \$25 dues) – who is bankrolling their operation?

Safety and Education

AHSA certainly talks a lot about safety and education on their website, but *what programs have they proposed? Who specifically in law enforcement are they working with? Also, what problems are there with NSSF programs that need to be addressed in order to “restore” pride in our community?*

Hunting and Conservation

AHSA talks a great game about the importance of hunting and conservation; but what are they doing? From reviewing their website, not one program is mentioned. While the AHSA site does have some links to state hunting websites, it seems to be a watered-down version of the NSSF www.huntandshoot.org portal that provides access to helpful hunting and shooting resources, and links to searchable state-by-state databases.

Legal and Legislative

NSSF has been dedicated to maintaining a political climate supportive of America's traditional firearms rights. NSSF has focused on promoting unified positions on critical issues affecting the industry and in developing strategic policy alliances and partnerships with legislative consultants and other organizations.

Has AHSA developed a legal or lobbying team to advocate on behalf of hunters and shooters? Are they prepared to actively challenge gun control and anti-hunting groups like the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence (Brady Campaign) (<http://www.bradycampaign.org/>) to which some of their leaders have strong ties?

AHSA and Industry Lawsuits

One of the most significant disconnects between what AHSA states and what AHSA does, can be seen in the baseless lawsuits against the firearms industry. AHSA has publicly endorsed the Protection of Lawful Commerce In Arms Act (PLCAA), stating “AHSA believes gun manufacturers, distributors and dealers should not be held civilly liable solely for the criminal acts of third parties who injure or kill innocent victims. Manufacturers, distributors or dealers who knowingly and willfully violate the law or conduct themselves in an unlawful manner should not be immune from civil liability.”ⁱⁱ However, Robert Ricker, executive director (AHSA) and Joe Vince, board member (AHSA), have been paid witnesses against the firearms industry in municipal suits in California, Washington, D.C. and New York City (including the “City of New York v. Beretta U.S.A. Corp. et al” case which is still pending).

During one case in which Ricker testified for the NAACP against 68 gun manufacturers and distributors, he was asked about statements he made while representing the firearms industry denouncing lawsuits aimed at holding manufacturers responsible for the criminal misuse of their products by third parties. Ricker's response was, "I was paid to put forth that position."ⁱⁱⁱ He then admitted that he was being paid \$225 an hour by the NAACP to testify on its behalf. So now when Mr. Ricker claims he and AHSA, who is paying him a salary of \$3000 a month, are in favor of protecting the industry from baseless lawsuits, *what are we to believe?*

Does the truth go to the highest bidder?

Founders / Executives

While AHSA purports to be a pro-hunting, pro-conservation and pro-gun organization, its leadership and board would qualify as a blue ribbon committee of activists who are anything but friends to the hunting, shooting sports and firearms community. Let's take a look at who runs this "hunters and shooters" organization:

Robert Ricker (Executive Director, AHSA)

- Paid witness against the firearms industry for cases where plaintiffs attempted to hold gun manufacturers liable for the criminal misuse of their products by third parties.
- Monthly salary of \$3000; AHSA claims no more than 150 members who pay \$25 dues. The rest of the money comes from "individual contributions" with the largest contributors on the AHSA board of directors.^{iv}
- Paid an hourly fee of \$225 to \$250 dollars for testimony, depositions, and meetings with the *Brady Campaign*.^v
- Consults for the *Educational Fund to End Handgun Violence* (the "educational" arm of the *Coalition to Stop Gun Violence*).^{vi} (<http://www.csgv.org/>)
- Consults with *Virginians for Public Safety* (<http://www.vapublicsafety.com/>) (lobbying for additional restrictions on law abiding gun owners).^{vii}

Ray Schoenke (President, AHSA)

- Mr. Schoenke, his wife, his daughter and son have been generous donors of anti-gun candidates including: Al Gore, Barbara Boxer, Bill Clinton, Dianne Feinstein, Ted Kennedy, Carolyn McCarthy and John Kerry.^{viii}
- Mr. Schoenke and his wife donated \$10,000 to Handgun Control, Inc. (HCI) in 2000.^{ix}
- Mr. Schoenke's daughter and son each contributed \$5000 to HCI in 2000.^x

John Rosenthal (President, AHSA Foundation)

- Rosenthal is the leader of *Stop Handgun Violence*, the principal anti-gun group in the state of Massachusetts (credited with being the "political force behind the strict gun control laws of Massachusetts"^{xi})
- Rosenthal is a former member of the *HCI* board of directors, now known as the *Brady Campaign*.
- Rosenthal has most recently focused his energy on voicing opposition to firearms' advertisements during sporting events < <http://news.bostonherald.com/localRegional/view.bg?articleid=154057> >

Jody Powell (Co-Chairman, AHSA Advisory Board)

- Press Secretary for one of the most anti-gun U.S. administrations, President Jimmy Carter.

Joe Vince (Board Member, AHSA)

- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) architect of the Clinton-Gore regulatory assault on the Second Amendment.
- His company *Crime Gun Solutions* (CGS) employs a number of other ex-ATF officials including Gerard Nunziato, who told the Houston Chronicle that "If it wasn't for criminals, there wouldn't be a gun industry in this country."
- *Crime Gun Solutions* provides consulting services for the lawyers at the *Brady Campaign*, frequently appearing as paid expert witnesses in lawsuits against the firearms industry.

ⁱ "NRA Doesn't Represent Both Hunters and Gun Owners" (Bill Schneider, NewWest, July 21, 2006)

ⁱⁱ http://www.huntersandshooters.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=130&Itemid=32 (The American Hunters and Shooters Association website)

ⁱⁱⁱ NAACP trial transcript, April 7, 2003 page 1367 – cross examination of defendants counsel

^{iv} Deposition of Robert Ricker, United States District Court For the Eastern District of New York, City of New York vs. Beretta U.S.A. Corp. et al., September 27, 2005

^v *ibid*

^{vi} *ibid*

^{vii} *ibid*

^{viii} www.opensecrets.org (website of the Center for Responsive Politics)

^{ix} *ibid*

^x *ibid*

^{xi} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_E._Rosenthal (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)