

Answering Question #7

7. The right to keep and bear arms was spelled out in the Second Amendment so United States citizens could:
- a. protect themselves against murderers and thieves
 - b. fight off invading armies
 - c. both a and b above
 - d. resist our own government in the event it grew tyrannical

The Second Amendment says:

“A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”¹⁰

The true meaning of this amendment has been tortured and twisted. But by examining this amendment from the perspective of our founders, its meaning becomes clear. Let’s look at a few historical quotes that relate to the Second Amendment. First, a quote from Samuel Adams who said:

“And that the said Constitution be never construed to authorize Congress ... to prevent the people of the United States, who are peaceable citizens, from keeping their own arms.”¹¹

According to Adams, all law abiding citizens have the right to keep and bear arms. Some have claimed that individuals do not have the right to their own arms because the militia referred to the military or other armed government agency. But we see that Adams did not hold to that view. Regarding the militia, let’s look at what George Mason, co-author of the Second Amendment said:

“I ask, Sir, what is the militia? It is the whole people. To disarm the people is the best and most effectual way to enslave them.”¹²

Mason not only defines militia as the whole population but confirms that individuals have the right to their own arms. Mason leaves no doubt as to the purpose of an armed population; it is to defend themselves against those who would enslave them.

St. George Tucker, a Revolutionary War militia officer, legal scholar, and later a U.S. District Court judge appointed by James Madison in 1813, gives us insight regarding what tyrannical forces were of concern.

“The right of self defense is the first law of nature: in most governments it has been the study of rulers to confine this right within the narrowest limits possible. Wherever standing armies are kept up, and the right of the people to keep and

bear arms is, under any color or pretext whatsoever, prohibited, liberty, if not already annihilated, is on the brink of destruction.”¹³

In Tucker’s words we find evidence that the right of the people to bear arms is for protection against armed forces of our own government. Standing armies, which today could be defined as professional armed federal agencies, of which we have many, should understand that the people are constitutionally authorized to resist if they overstep their bounds.

The wisdom of being armed is this: When you have the ability and the will to fight, you usually don’t have to. This reality has been shown in confrontations everywhere, from neighborhood playgrounds to the highest levels of international diplomacy.

However, the purpose of this booklet is to deploy a greater weapon than guns, that weapon is knowledge. If we the people are informed regarding the timeless principles that produced our freedom, we will know how to choose leaders who are likewise informed. Our goal is to defeat tyranny with ballots, not bullets.