

Resolved: We should have the right bear arms.

Affirmative: Adam Smith '14

Negative: David Levine '16

The second amendment to the US Constitution reads:

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.

Thursday's debate will **not** be a debate over the interpretation of this amendment. In other words, this is not a debate on the extent to which we should enact controls on gun ownership for we are not in the business of catching minnows; we pursue big fish. Thus, we will be gathering together to discuss whether or not the ability to bear arms should be enshrined as a right at all.

For over two centuries, the United States has defined the strength of its civic character based on the the pride of individual self-reliance. We have touted limited government, liberty, and free markets as the political and economic system most conducive to human dignity. As part and parcel of this ideology, we have looked to gun ownership as an integral component of our liberty. Why look to a police force for our self-defense, when the individual should be capable of ensuring his or her safety? Why breed a nation of tentative cowards, alienated and fearful of the fire power around them, when we should be able to trust that our citizens are responsible enough to take advantage of the freedom and rights owed to them by their government and God? Among these, the right to bear arms.

In response, many will now argue that tragedies such as the mass murder of innocent children at Sandy Hook Elementary should force us to reconsider the role of guns in a free society. Are we really free when we must fear daily for the lives of our most vulnerable citizens? Some will now say that we can have a debate over the proper legal extent of gun ownership, but that such a conversation must unfold in the context of the state's duty to ensure public safety, rather than from the departure point of a right to guns. Indeed, the preponderance of guns in our society may lead us to the indulgence of reckless fantasies more than it contributes to the freedom and vitality of our democracy.

On what side of this old-fashioned Mexican standoff will you take your place?

Please report with sufficient ammunition to the Faculty Room of Massachusetts Hall at 7:30pm. Dress well.

Rabbinically Yours,
Maimonides