



A Constitutionalist View: Walmart to Stop Selling Handgun Ammunition

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Walmart CEO Doug McMillon announced in a memo to company employees on September 3 that the retail giant will discontinue sales of short-barrel rifle ammunition, as well as sales of handgun ammunition, and will end handgun sales entirely in Alaska. The announcement was made as a response to two deadly shootings at Walmart stores over the summer, one in Southaven, Mississippi, on July 30, in which a former Walmart employee killed two people, and another in El Paso, Texas, on August 3, in which a gunman shot and killed 22 people.



As tragic as these events were, it does not follow that discontinuing the sales of the types of ammunition he mentioned will do anything to prevent similar tragedies in the future. A crazed killer has an unlimited choice of weapons available to him and it is impossible to remove all of them from availability.

McMillon stated in his memo: "Our remaining assortment will be even more focused on the needs of hunting and sport shooting enthusiasts. It will include long barrel deer rifles and shotguns, much of the ammunition they require, as well as hunting and sporting accessories and apparel."

This statement indicates that McMillon obviously has little understanding of the reason why Americans have long cherished the right to keep and bear arms.

As former judge Andrew Napolitano wrote in an article in the *Washington Times* in 2013:

The historical reality of the Second Amendment's protection of the right to keep and bear arms is not that it protects the right to shoot deer. It protects the right to shoot tyrants, and it protects the right to shoot at them effectively, with the same instruments they would use upon us.

As to how the constitutionalist should view Walmart's decision to end the sales of certain types of ammunition there are two separate matters to consider.

The first is, the Second Amendment, long cherished by constitutionalists as the ultimate guarantor of our right to keep and bear arms, prohibits *government* from infringing upon that right. Since Walmart is a publicly traded family-owned business, controlled by members of the Walton family, it is not a government entity and is not bound by constitutional limitations placed on government.

Constitutionalists have long supported the right of private businesses to operate in a manner they see



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 4, 2019

fit, free from government interference — including the right to determine what services to offer and to whom they decide to offer them.

The second point, therefore, is that Walmart certainly has the right to refuse to sell any product it decides to, including ammunition. But, conversely, consumers offended by this position also have the right *not* to support that position through their patronage.

The NRA issued a statement in response to Walmart's decision: "The strongest defense of freedom has always been our free market economy. It is shameful to see Walmart succumb to the pressure of the anti-gun elites. Lines at Walmart will soon be replaced by lines at other retailers who are more supportive of America's fundamental freedoms."

Warren Mass has served The New American since its launch in 1985 in several capacities, including marketing, editing, and writing. Since retiring from the staff several years ago, he has been a regular contributor to the magazine. Warren writes from Texas and can be reached at wmass@thenewamerican.com



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