

Business Profile: California Rifle and Pistol Association

In a day and age where nothing is guaranteed it is reassuring to know that there are organizations which stand up for the rights and privileges enjoyed by Americans.

One such organization, the California Rifle and Pistol Association has been the embodiment of our Second Amendment freedoms since its inception in 1875 when it began as a governing body for shooting competitions.

Apart from acquiring a non-profit status in 1929, CRPA maintained that course until roughly the early 1970s when the organization readjusted its aims to be more reactionary to perceived threats to our second amendment liberties. Since then, the CRPA has shifted the majority of its focus to protecting the fundamental liberties that allow for those sports to be practiced. In effect, they have gone from hobbyists to crusaders.

Not to be confused with the National Rifle Association or NRA, which advocates for Second Amendment protections at the national level (and can at times be a blanket term for all gun advocacy groups), the CRPA is an independent organization and does so with sole focus on the state of California. The two organizations do however have similar goals and support each other's initiatives.

Today, the CRPA stands with a number of other groups, most notably CalGuns Association, Gun Owners of California, and the Golden State Second Amendment Council (GS2AC) in the fight to defend the Second Amendment at the state level.

According to a census.gov sponsored telephone survey there are about eight million gun owners in California representing 21.3% of the total population. Contrast that with states such as Alaska, Tennessee, Texas, and Maine where the gun ownership is in the 40-50% range and you may understand their angst. It seems the numbers are stacked against them.

The CRPA, however, is a growing organization, with membership numbers hovering around the 40,000 mark up from 30,000 only seven years ago. Their members have varying interests in firearms and include hunters and competition shooters, firearms industry businesses such as gun shops and ranges, home protection advocates, and even military and law enforcement professionals whose livelihood depends on their access to firearms.

They even boast a large contingent of "plinkers", a name derived from the sound of a bullet striking an aluminum can off a fence post, or folks who just take satisfaction in a therapeutic round of target practice.

Executive Director John Fields joined the CRPA team in 2007 after a distinguished career in non-profit management having previously worked with Habitat for Humanity and the YWCA. Though he admits to not having ever hunted prior to joining the organization, he holds that he has been a lifelong proponent of our Second Amendment freedoms.

"It's a real honor to get up in the morning, and run this organization," says Fields who adds that heading the CRPA has been "an exciting introduction for me to a lot of this stuff and over the years I have acquired firearms, been to the range many, many times, and learned to hunt."

Fields is optimistic about what the future holds for gun laws in the state of California. As a testament to the CRPA's popularity and the growing support of Second Amendment rights within the state he notes the recent upswing in CRPA membership numbers and states with pride that many new members include young adults, women, and minorities.

Amongst Fields' favorite memories while head of the organization, apart from boosting membership and standing up a Political Action Committee to represent the CRPA's interests to lawmakers in Sacramento, is meeting Air Force General Chuck Yeager, who was the guest speaker at CRPA's annual gala event the year Fields took the helm. Yeager, a former fighter pilot, had an illustrious military career and was honored with scores of decorations. His most celebrated achievement however is that he was the first human being to fly faster than the speed of sound.

Fields is eagerly awaiting next year's CRPA Gala as it will mark the organization's 140th anniversary. Events such as this are vital to the success of non-profit organizations such as CRPA in that they generate a huge amount of support for the organization in the coming year.

Slated to fill the guest speaker role at the 140th Anniversary Gala is Theresa Vail, a former Miss America competitor and National Guard mechanic, who in July of 2015 will become the host of the Outdoor Channel's new hunting show "Limitless with Theresa Vail."

Membership in the California Rifle and Pistol Association can be obtained from as low as \$22 annually and the proceeds benefit the organization's political objectives which are wholly concerned with protecting second amendment freedoms. Members receive not only a voice within the organization and the opportunity to participate in CRPA committees and volunteer outreach programs but also an annual subscription to The Firing Line their bi-monthly news publication. In addition, members also receive an annual updated copy of "the gun law booklet" which contains information on recent legislation effecting gun laws.

For more information on the mission of the California Rifle and Pistol Association or to become a member please visit their website: www.carpa.org