

Date: February 7, 2023

SB 116: Standardizing firearms safety programs in school districts.

Opponent - Written only

Pat Gouger, Private Citizen, Overland Park, KS

Chairman Thompson and Members of the Committee,

The NRA created "curriculum" including Eddie Eagle does not belong in Kansas grade schools.

I do not understand how "gun safety" belongs in grade school at all. Kids can not purchase guns. Kids can not own guns. Kids can not bring guns to school. There are no sanctioned academic or extracurricular activities involving guns on school grounds. It is illegal.

<https://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/citation/quotes/7816>

Why is there a proposed safety "education" program proposed for kids that aren't not allowed to buy, own or use firearms at a place where firearms are not authorized?

If a parent wants to teach responsible hunting to their child in an appropriate setting with proper safety protocols, that is their individual right. Exposing all children to gun curriculum in public schools is not the proper environment.

A gun safety curriculum is far beyond the core reading, writing and arithmetic slogan that many Kansans would like to see emphasized. The bill's fiscal note includes required costs to form a committee to meet several times to review and implement the program standards. Local schools would incur additional unknown costs to train teachers. The NRA program material costs are also unknown or undisclosed.

Using the NRA as a supplier of such education is problematic at best. It's aiding a corrupt, criminally negligent or complicit organization at worst.

The NRA abandoned its original firearms safety advocacy role decades ago and moved to promoting extreme political agendas and groups. Extremist organizations should not be funded and rewarded by the state of Kansas. The documented actions of the NRA organization and officials over many years is what disqualifies them.

In 1995, Former President George H.W. Bush rescinded his membership:

"The letter, printed in full in The New York Times, read in part: "I was outraged when (NRA President) Mr. Wayne LaPierre ... defended his attack on federal agents as "jack-booted thugs."
... Al Whicher, who served on my [United States Secret Service] detail when I was Vice

President and President, was killed in Oklahoma City. He was no Nazi. He was a kind man, a loving parent, a man dedicated to serving his country - and serve it well he did.

"... I am a gun owner and an avid hunter. Over the years I have agreed with most of N.R.A.'s objectives, particularly your educational and training efforts ...

"However, your broadside against Federal agents deeply offends my own sense of decency and honor; and it offends my concept of service to country. It indirectly slanders a wide array of government law enforcement officials, who are out there, day and night, laying their lives on the line for all of us.

"You have not repudiated Mr. LaPierre's unwarranted attack. Therefore, I resign as a Life Member of N.R.A., said resignation to be effective upon your receipt of this letter. Please remove my name from your membership list."

<https://www.jacksonville.com/story/news/2016/06/24/fact-check-george-hw-bush-left-nra-over-jack-booted-remarks/15714589007/>

In 2018, an NRA official contacted an Alex Jones Infowars.com writer to push a false conspiracy theory after the Parkland Florida high school mass shooting.

"The day after a shooter killed 17 students at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, a National Rifle Association officer sent a message from his official email to an Infowars writer known for harassing parents of children killed at Sandy Hook. According to emails obtained by HuffPost, NRA training instructor and program coordinator Mark Richardson contacted Wolfgang Halbig — who has made several trips to Newtown, Connecticut, to self-investigate the 2012 shooting where 20 children and six adults were fatally shot — to pitch the Infowars contributor a potential conspiracy theory about the attack in Florida.

"Just like [Sandy Hook], there is so much more to this story," Richardson wrote in his email, dated February 15, 2018. "[The Parkland shooter] was not alone." In his message to Halbig, Richardson suggested details of a possible second shooter at Stoneman Douglas, to see if the conspiracist would take the bait and pursue the line of questioning on his own.

"The email exchange itself was released as part of the discovery process for the lawsuit that Sandy Hook parent Scarlett Lewis has filed against Alex Jones, suing the Infowars founder for intentional infliction of emotional distress."

<https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/03/nra-official-emailed-infowars-writer-about-parkland-shooting.html>

In 2019, the San Francisco city government formally labeled the pro-gun lobbyist National Rifle Association (NRA) a "domestic terrorist organization". The resolution stated, "the NRA exists to spread disinformation and knowingly puts weapons in the hands of those who would harm and terrorize us by blocking common-sense gun violence prevention legislation".

<https://www.courthousenews.com/nra-drops-suit-over-san-francisco-branding-it-a-terror-group/>

The NRA admitted to taking Russian money from a Putin ally and was a target of an FBI investigation over accepting foreign money and operating as a foreign asset.

<https://www.everytown.org/press/new-nra-admits-financial-support-from-russian-official-reportedly-at-center-of-fbi-investigation/>

This tax exempt organization was so corrupt and had so mismanaged its funds, it filed for bankruptcy. That bankruptcy was later dismissed, as the courts found the filings were based on a rogue filing by the NRA president without notifications and input from other company officials.

"The NY AG argued that the case was an attempt by NRA leadership to escape accountability for using the group's coffers as their personal piggybank."

"LaPierre testified that he kept the bankruptcy largely secret to prevent leaks from the group's 76-member board, which is divided in its support for him.

The judge wrote that if the case is refiled, he would immediately take up "concerns about disclosure, transparency, secrecy, conflicts of interest" between NRA officials and their bankruptcy legal team"

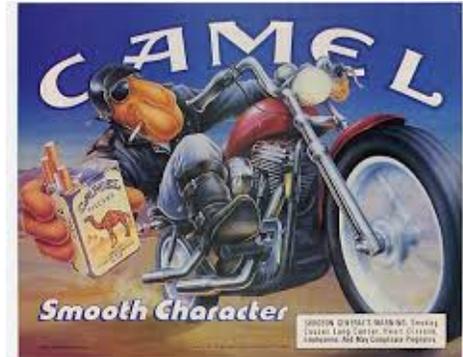
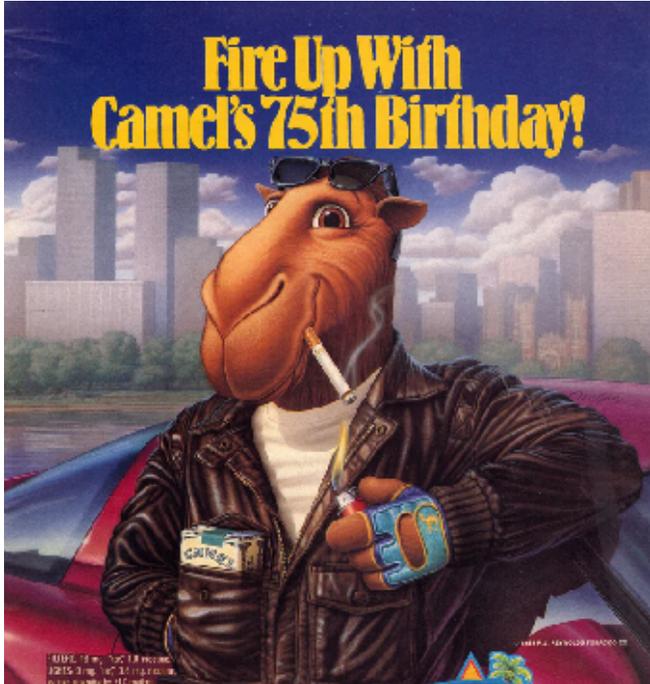
<https://apnews.com/article/nra-bankruptcy-dismissed-a281b888b64d391374f24539a820d60f>

The NRA is an organization held in low regard by the public. A Fox News poll in 2019 showed only 42% of Americans approved of the NRA, while 47% disapproved. Even among gun owners, only 56% of respondents approved of the NRA, down from 71% in 2013.

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/nra-favorability-poll_n_5d557febe4b056fafd08770c

Simply stated, an organization with such a disgraceful history should not receive a dime of Kansan taxpayers' dollars.

Lastly, the ad campaign itself is absurd. However, this isn't the first time a cartoon character was used to reach an audience that can not purchase its product. The R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company was sued over its ad campaigns of the 1990's.



Legislating the NRA Eddie Eagle program into school curriculum should not be viewed as a serious proposal. In fact, it has been the subject of jokes nationally for over 20 years, including The Daily Show with Jon Stewart in April 2000.

<https://www.cc.com/video/wz4f7m/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-ad-nauseam-nra>

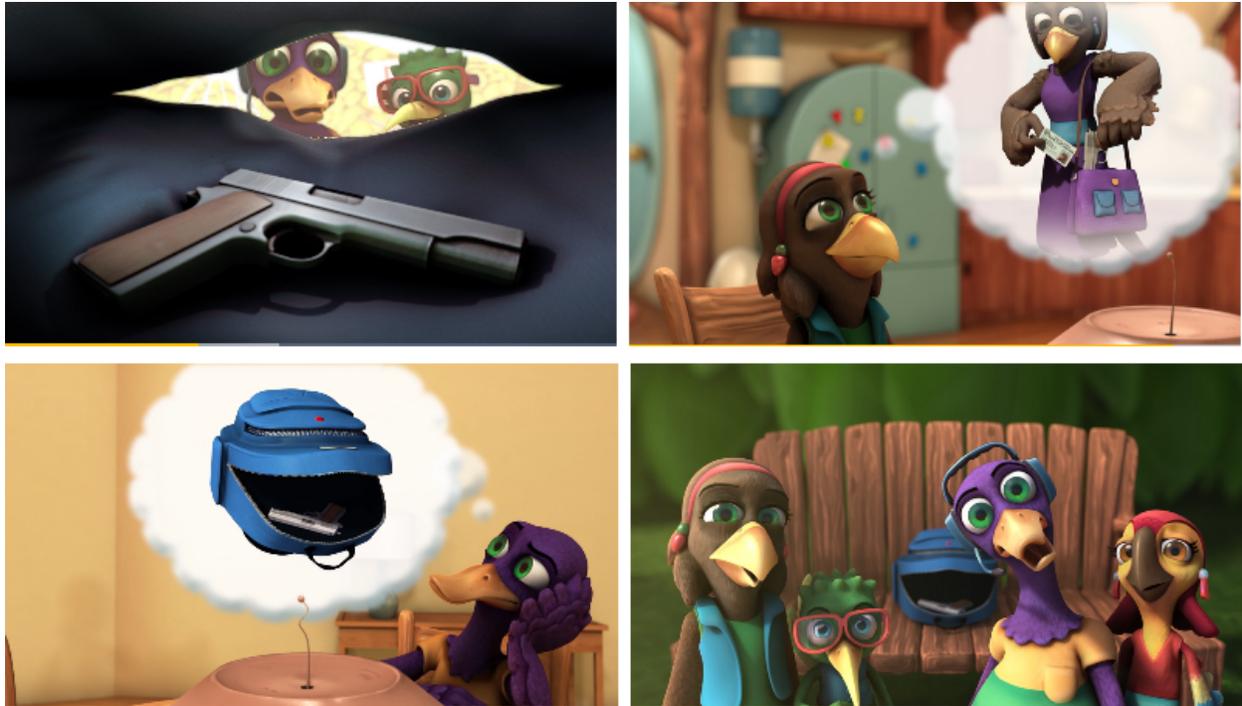


"The NRA reaches out to kids with a new mascot, Eddie Eagle: he's the Joe Camel of firearms."

As adults, some of us can laugh at the absurdity of the ad.

Sadly, this is not a program kids can laugh at.

High levels of anxiety and depression are reported in children today. They have to participate in school lockdown drills in anticipation of mass shooters. Do we really want to subject kindergarten and grade school kids to this additional stressful “educational curriculum”?



Screen shots from the NRA website - Eddie Eagle video

The thought of introducing a classroom program and activity that will causally subject young kids to the traumatic images and situations of finding concealed guns laying around in unattended backpacks at the playground and in mom’s purse is highly offensive.

As a taxpayer, I find public funding of a discredited and dangerous organization like the NRA offensive.

I urge the committee to reject this wasteful and harmful program.

Thank you,

Pat Gouger
Overland Park, KS