



**Violence Policy Center**

1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW  
Suite 1014  
Washington, DC 20036

202.822.8200 voice  
202.822.8205 fax  
www.vpc.org web

October 10, 2005

Daniel M. Snyder  
Owner  
Washington Redskins  
Redskins Park  
21300 Redskin Park Drive  
Ashburn, VA 20147

Dear Mr. Snyder:

It is my understanding that, according to the Washington Redskins web page, the "Redskins will host the inaugural Redskins Sporting Clays Challenge, presented by NRA [National Rifle Association] Sports, on Tuesday, Oct. 25, with the proceeds benefiting the team's Charitable Foundation" and that the event "will feature current and former Redskins players and coaches, placed with teams of four competitors for a day of sporting clays."

As a Washington, D.C.-based national non-profit organization working to stop gun death and injury, the Violence Policy Center (VPC) strongly urges you to reconsider the Redskins' hosting of, and participation in, this event. The National Rifle Association is currently lobbying the U.S. Congress to overturn Washington, D.C.'s landmark gun laws. The bills to repeal the District of Columbia's gun laws promoted by the NRA would: legalize handguns as well as semiautomatic assault weapons and 50 caliber sniper rifles; allow any person to carry, openly or concealed, loaded handguns and other concealable firearms in houses, places of business, or other land "possessed by that person"; and, severely weaken the District's ban on armor-piercing handgun ammunition. At the same time, it stands as an outrageous attack by an outside special interest group on the home rule rights of D.C. residents.

This radical legislation endangers the safety of District of Columbia residents, commuters, tourists, public officials, and the law enforcement professionals sworn to protect our nation's capital. The legislation is vigorously opposed by Mayor Anthony Williams, Metropolitan Police Department Chief Charles Ramsey, and D.C. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton. On June 28, 2005, Mayor Williams and Chief Ramsey appeared before a congressional committee to express their united opposition to the NRA-backed legislation. Chief Ramsey's testimony included the following statement:

“What impact would the repeal of D.C.’s gun laws have on our city? From my perspective, the answer to that question is straightforward—and it is scary. Repealing our guns laws would mean substantially more handguns in the District of Columbia. And more handguns would mean more gun crimes, more gun violence and more homicides, as well as more accidental shootings and suicides. More guns will also mean a greater threat to our police officers.”

Yet the NRA’s response to the views of our city’s leaders is to attack and mock. As just one example, the cover of the September 2005 issue of the National Rifle Association’s *America’s 1<sup>st</sup> Freedom* magazine features “Washington’s Newest Monument,” an imagined “monument” consisting of a giant tombstone marked “Washington, D.C., America’s Murder Capital.” The tombstone is covered with skulls and faces of the dead. Inside, a two-page photograph of Mayor Anthony Williams holding up his hands while making a point has the headline and caption, “D.C. to Criminals: We Surrender! The mayor of Washington, D.C., the Murder Capital of the U.S. for 14 of the last 15 years, strikes a telling pose as he defends D.C.’s absurd gun laws.” The article then goes on to attack Mayor Williams and Chief Ramsey. I have included a copy of the cover and article for your review.

The NRA works to portray its lobbying efforts to repeal D.C.’s gun laws as a manifestation of its concerns for District residents. Unfortunately, statements by current board members belie these claims. For example, board member Jeff Cooper, in his *Guns & Ammo* column “Cooper’s Corner,” in April 1991 wrote this regarding the murder rate in Los Angeles:

“the consensus is that no more than five to ten people in a hundred who die by gunfire in Los Angeles are any loss to society. These people fight small wars amongst themselves. It would seem a valid social service to keep them well-supplied with ammunition.”

The NRA also ignores the fact that Washington, D.C.’s strict gun laws work. In 2000, only three percent of crime guns recovered in the District came from D.C. gun dealers. In contrast, 59 percent of traceable D.C. crime guns were first purchased in Virginia and Maryland. Another 18 percent of D.C. crime guns were bought from gun dealers in North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. The District is, in essence, being held hostage by the weak gun laws of other jurisdictions. Meanwhile, the District’s gun laws have been extremely effective in protecting D.C. youth from the scourge of youth suicide. According to research conducted by my organization, no child in the District of Columbia age 16 and under was the victim of a firearm suicide for the years 2000 through 2002 (and there were no suicides by other means during this time period). Meanwhile, Alaska, Montana, and Wyoming—the three states with the nation’s highest rates of gun ownership combined with some of the weakest gun

laws in the country—led the nation in the rate of youth firearms suicide in the 16 and under age group.

The mission statement of the Washington Redskins Charitable Foundation declares that the foundation works to “make a positive and measurable impact on youth in the greater Washington, D.C. region in the areas of literacy, youth development, education, community service, health and wellness.” As you know, District youth have paid a disproportionately high price in death and injury due to gun homicide. I know, as a Redskins fan and having attended Redskins games, that the team has publicly honored the memory of District youth whose promising lives have been cut short by gun violence. Recognizing that gun violence is one of the single most prevalent, and preventable, factors that can affect the “health and wellness” of youth in the Washington, D.C., area, I urge the Washington Redskins to end all participation in this event. The Washington Redskins Charitable Foundation’s involvement with an organization whose mission is to repeal Washington D.C.’s gun laws cannot be reconciled with the mission of the foundation.

If you would like to discuss further the issues raised in this letter, I can be reached at 202-822-8200 x101.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Josh Sugarmann  
Executive Director