

Backgrounder: NRA Annual Meeting 2014

The National Rifle Association's 2014 annual meeting takes place in Indianapolis, Indiana from April 25 to 27. According to the NRA website, this yearly event features "spectacular displays of firearms" and "products from every major firearm company in the country."

While the centerpiece of the convention used to be the Annual Meeting of Members, the true draw for attendees is now the giant trade show of new firearms that accompanies the convention each year. This firearms trade show is second in size only to the annual SHOT Show, the gun industry's official trade show, which is closed to the public. The "carry of personal firearms" will be permitted in the Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium.

Here are a few important things to keep in mind about the NRA annual meeting:

1) Today's NRA is a gun industry trade association masquerading as a shooting sports foundation.

The NRA receives tens of millions in financial support from the firearms industry. Gun companies, known as "corporate partners," have donated between \$19.3 million and \$60.2 million to the NRA since 2005, as detailed in the recent VPC study <u>Blood Money II: How Gun Industry Dollars Fund the NRA</u>.

The symbiotic relationship between the NRA and the gun industry will be on full display at the annual meeting. The meeting itself is sponsored by firearm accessories vendor **MidwayUSA**, the NRA's top corporate donor which has given the organization nearly \$10 million through its "Round-Up" program alone.

Gun manufacturers are the official sponsors of numerous events at the annual meeting. For example, the "pre show sponsor" for the "Stand and Fight Rally" featuring Oliver North and Sarah Palin is **Remington Outdoor Company**, formerly known as Freedom Group — the company that made the Bushmaster assault rifle used to kill 20 children and six educators in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012.

Beyond the annual meeting, gun industry members sponsor the NRA's "Life of Duty" programs, including the *American Warrior* online magazine and free NRA memberships for military and law enforcement. Life of Duty sponsors include **Bushmaster**, **Colt's**, **FNH USA**, **Smith & Wesson**, and **Sig Sauer**.

The NRA women's network is sponsored by **Smith & Wesson** — the company that manufactured the M&P pistol used at the recent shooting at Fort Hood, as well as the M&P assault rifle used in the July 2012 shooting at a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado (M&P stands for Military & Police).

2) Million-dollar NRA donors are part of the "Golden Ring of Freedom."

At the annual meeting, the NRA will hold a Ring of Freedom Brunch to honor donors, including industry contributors, that have given a million dollars or more to the organization. As a reward, the NRA will induct them into the so-called Golden Ring of Freedom. Just as Masters Tournament champions receive green jackets, inductees into the Golden Ring of Freedom receive golden jackets to mark their pro-gun achievement (see pictures, page 3 and 4).

Last year's Golden Ring of Freedom inductees included both **Freedom Group** (now **Remington Outdoor Company)** and **Smith & Wesson**.

Just last month, NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre visited Smith & Wesson's headquarters and received a \$600,000 check from the gunmaker (see picture, page 5). Smith & Wesson CEO James Debney pledged to work hand in glove with the NRA, stating: "Through its various programs, pro-gun reform legislation, and grassroots efforts, the existence of the NRA is crucial to the preservation of the shooting sports and to the entire firearms industry."

3) The Increasing Militarization of the Gun Industry's Products.

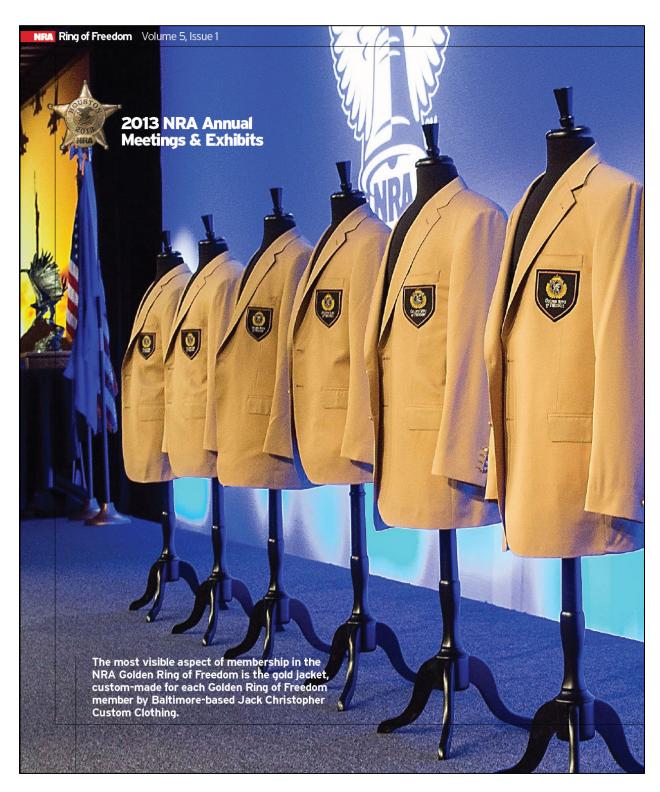
Faced with <u>an ongoing decline in household gun ownership</u>, the gun industry has focused on the manufacture of semiautomatic assault rifles and assault pistols, as well as small, powerful pistols designed for concealed carry. Anyone with a credit card and a relatively clean criminal record can build their own army with products sold on the U.S. civilian gun market.

The gun industry is selling these products in the absence of federal oversight. Unlike automobiles, children's toys, and every other consumer product, <u>firearms are not regulated by the federal government for health and safety.</u>

To market these deadly products, gun companies have adopted militarized language in promoting their assault weapons, using phrases like "duty" and "patrol" with images of shooters dressed in military and law enforcement garb. One ad from **Freedom Group** (now **Remington Outdoor Company**) brand **DPMS/Panther Arms** promises that their assault rifle is "built to be as tough as the job," never defining what that "job" might actually be (see picture, page 6).

Most Americans would be shocked at what the gun industry has become. While the NRA gathers to celebrate gun industry contributions and help its "corporate partners" sell more guns, the rest of America continues to pay the price — more than 31,000 gun deaths per year and 81,000 firearm injuries.

For more information, contact VPC Communications Director Avery Palmer at 202-822-8200 x 104, apalmer@vpc.org, or visit www.vpc.org.



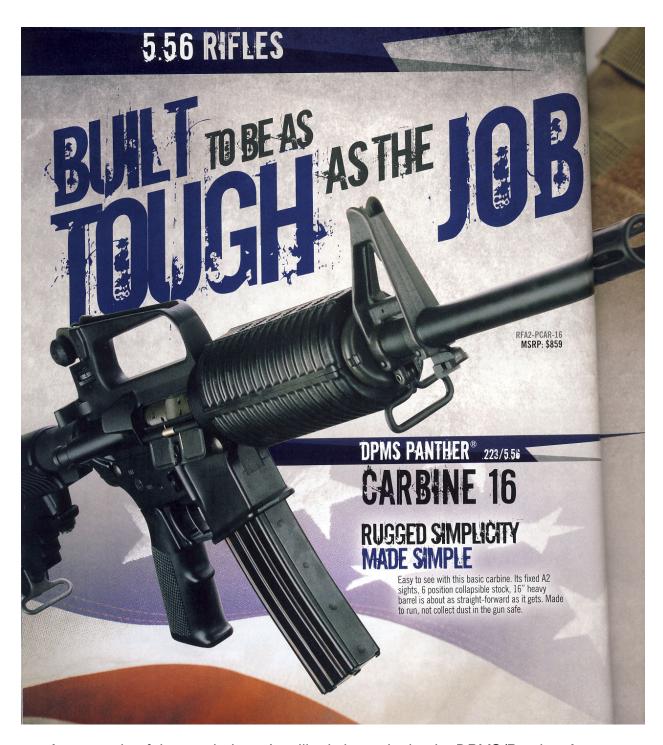
Golden jackets are presented to donors who have given the NRA a million dollars or more.



Smith & Wesson CEO James Debney on the cover of Ring of Freedom magazine in his golden jacket.



Smith & Wesson CEO James Debney presents NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre with a check for \$600,000.



An example of the gun industry's militaristic marketing by DPMS/Panther Arms, a Remington Outdoor Company (formerly Freedom Group) manufacturer.