

# Gun rights group holds inaugural talk

Georgetown Law Weekly 2-8 OCT 07

by Hasa Kingo, 1L  
Guest Writer

A new student organization at the Georgetown University Law Center is aiming to foster debate and awareness about one of the most controversial issues in the Constitution: The Second Amendment.

Last Thursday, thirty-two students gathered in McDonough Hall for the inaugural meeting of the Georgetown Law Militia. The group's mission is to give law students an opportunity to advocate and defend the constitutionality of gun ownership.

"The idea behind what the group believes is that there is a human right to self-defense," said Michael Stollenwerk, 3E, the Law Militia's founder and current President. "We believe that the way to protect that human right is through guns," Stollenwerk added.

The composition of the Law Militia ranges from first-year to third-year students all interested in the principles behind the Second Amendment, and its impact within contemporary society.

Minutes before the group's first meeting last Thursday, students were out in the hallways discussing the agenda of the first meeting. "I hope everyone brought their guns," one student quipped.

Just a few months ago, Stollenwerk said he scarcely would have imagined that his idea would generate the kind of interest he saw at the first meeting. "I was really impressed by our numbers," Stollenwerk said.

Stollenwerk is the first to admit that his desire to form the group didn't develop overnight. "I was here for over a year before I even thought about forming the group," Stollenwerk said.

Stollenwerk first conceptualized

his plan for the Law Militia while he was a member of the Federalist Society. At one of the group's meetings last year, Stollenwerk said he had the opportunity to hear attorney Alan Gura discuss a case concerning a challenge to Washington, D.C.'s various gun bans, *Parker v. District of Columbia*. Stollenwerk said he was impressed by to hear Gura's defense of the Second Amendment.

After attending the meeting, Stollenwerk decided that he wanted to invest his time and effort into starting up a student group dedicated to the issue of gun ownership. The task was harder than he imagined. Stollenwerk said getting the groundwork laid out for the group wasn't an easy task. "First, I found out how to start a group, and then had to go through a lot of bureaucratic obstacles," Stollenwerk said.

Once Stollenwerk formed the Law Militia, his next concern was getting a speaker for the group's first meeting. Stollenwerk said that since he had been so impressed by Gura, selecting him was an obvious choice.

At the Law Militia's first meeting, Gura discussed the *Parker* case at length while also delving into the theoretical prerogatives behind his defense of the Second Amendment.

"As far as the Constitution is concerned, hand guns are a protected class of weapons under the Second Amendment," Gura said. "The first clause of the Second Amendment is insignificant to its operative clause."

Later in the meeting, Gura discussed his commitment towards defending individual rights. "I've always believed in the Bill of Rights," Gura said. "One of reasons I became an attorney was to be in a position to vindicate individual liberties."

During the meeting, Gura continuously emphasized the signifi-

cance of the *Parker* case, noting that the case is the first in which a federal appeals court in the United States has struck down a gun control law on Second Amendment grounds. "With this case, it's beginning to look like the tide may be shifting our way," Gura said.

As the present moment, the *Parker* case has been appealed to the Supreme Court. If the Court agrees to hear the case, it would be the first time since the 1939 case of *United States v. Miller* that the Supreme Court has directly interpreted how far the Second Amendment can reach.

Gura said that he's looking forward to the chance he has of arguing a case before the Supreme Court. "It's very excited," Gura said. "I've never done it before so this is definitely something worth looking forward to."

Should the *Parker* case go to the Supreme Court, Stollenwerk said him and others plan to be on hand. "Hopefully we'll organize a camp out or something so that we can get in there and see this argument," Stollenwerk said.

After the Law Militia's fist meeting concluded, Stollenwerk said that he that he would like to see more people come out to meetings, even if they don't agree with the group's ideological mission. "It would be kind of nice if people generally agreed with the group's objectives, but that's not a requirement," Stollenwerk said. "The Law Militia is open to anyone."

Despite expressing a desire to see more people come out to meetings, Stollenwerk said that he was still very impressed by the number of people the group was able to get for its first meeting. "This is about the same size as the largest student group gathering I've ever been to," Stollenwerk said. "Based on that I'd say this is a pretty good start."