

If Republicans treat their best friends this way why should any American trust them?

A WARNING FROM AARON ZELMAN

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If you don't own firearms, you might think this message doesn't apply to you.

If you hate firearms, you might even be glad to hear that some gun owners are "getting what they deserve."

***Think again. This message is about justice. About fairness.
It's about whether anyone in this country can trust a Republican administration.***

Within the last year:

- Americans watched as a government agent was caught on tape, trying to frame an innocent gun owner named John Glover. You can see the outrage for yourself.[i]

- The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) declared that a shoelace could be an "illegal machine gun." You can read the letter yourself.[ii]

• Americans learned that the ATF has no standards for determining whether a firearm is a legal semi-automatic or an "illegal machine gun" – even though the ATF's decision could mean the difference between freedom and prison for an innocent American. You can see the research for yourself.[iii]

- James Sensenbrenner, powerful Republican head of the House Judiciary Committee, blocked a common sense bill that would have required the ATF to videotape all firearms tests to prevent abuses like the one perpetrated against John Glover. You can read the proposed law yourself.[iv]

For decades, the ATF has been known as a brutal and arbitrary federal agency. In 1982, Congress recommended curbing its powers. Instead, every administration, including the current one, has given more money and more power to an agency that practically defines the phrase "jack-booted thug."

ATF abuses must stop. Now.

Innocent men and women who've been sent to prison or been driven into bankruptcy by ATF persecutions must be exonerated. Every last one of them.

True, ATF abuses span many administrations. But today the Republicans -- the gun owners' supposed friends -- have enormous power. Power to disband the agency. Power to reform it from top to bottom. Power to replace every incompetent and brute the agency employs.

***And what is the Bush administration doing to stop ATF abuses and seek justice for wronged gun owners?
Nothing. Absolutely nothing.***

Oh, that's not quite true. Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez and the Department of Justice did do one thing. They tried (and failed) to suppress a Congressional Research Service memo[v] revealing the ATF's scandalously sloppy lack of standards. They tried to bury it.

Do President Bush or Attorney General Gonzalez care that their core supporters are being abused? Or do they find the ATF's iron fist to be handy for keeping people frightened and obedient? (After all, it was George W. Bush who said a dictatorship would be easier -- as long as he was the dictator.[vi])

Bottom line: If Republicans are allowing their best friends to go to prison -- reputations ruined, families shattered, finances depleted -- then how will they treat you if you ever need justice? How will they treat your son or daughter? Or your husband or wife?

Throughout history, one sad truth has remained constant: We Jews have trusted "friendly" governments and have time and again been betrayed by our supposed protectors. If this government has so little commitment to justice for its own (well-armed) friends, then how long will a largely unarmed Jewish population remain safe in America?

Think about it. Then demand accountability. Demand justice.

Don't settle for anything less. Because if we tolerate injustice to other Americans, then we can't expect to receive justice ourselves, no matter who we are.

This message brought to you by:

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If government makes you AFRAID to exercise your rights, then you don't have any rights.

[i] Purchase the film "BATFE Fails the Test": www.jpfo.org/batfevideo.htm [ii] Read the infamous "shoelace" letter: www.jpfo.org/shoestring.jpg

[iii] Learn why ATF testing is scientifically invalid: www.jpfo.org/savage2.htm [iv] Read H.R. 1603: frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=109_cong_bills&docid=f:h1603ih.txt.pdf

[v] See the Congressional Research Service memo on the ATF's lack of standards: www.jpfo.org/ATFguntests.pdf [vi] Bush has made repeated variations on this statement. The best known was on CNN, December 18, 2000, where he said, "If this were a dictatorship, it'd be a heck of a lot easier, just so long as I'm the dictator." <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/001218/nd.01.html>