

A blue-tinted photograph of Rick Perry in a suit, holding a handgun high in his right hand and shouting. He is standing next to a younger man in a dark shirt with "Con-way" and "EXWAY" logos, who is also shouting. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a car. The text "GUNSLINGER" is overlaid in large white letters at the top.

GUNSLINGER

RICK PERRY'S RECKLESS RECORD ON GUNS

A REPORT BY THE BRADY CAMPAIGN TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

SEPTEMBER 2011

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As the nation's largest, non-partisan, grassroots organization leading the fight to prevent gun violence, the Brady Campaign, with its dedicated network of Million Mom March Chapters, works to enact and enforce sensible gun laws, regulations and public policies. The Brady Campaign is devoted to creating an America free from gun violence, where all Americans are safe at home, at school, at work, and in our communities.

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For continuing insight and comment on the gun issue, read Dennis Henigan's blog at www.bradycampaign.org/blog/. Visit the Brady Campaign website at www.bradycampaign.org.

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GUNSLINGER:

RICK PERRY'S RECKLESS RECORD ON GUNS

A Brady Campaign Presidential Primary Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With great fanfare and the hint of a sidearm, Governor Rick Perry of Texas recently declared his candidacy for the Republican nomination for President of the United States. His rocket-like rise to front-runner status for the Republican nomination has attracted greater scrutiny of his record as governor of Texas.

That's as it should be. With Mr. Perry seeking to become commander of a nation that leads the developed world in gun deaths and injuries, the Brady Campaign believes it is critical to provide more insight into Perry's attitudes and decisions about guns as a public official and an American citizen. We believe, further, that voters ought to have this information as quickly as possible to allow them to make informed decisions during the debates and town halls leading up to the casting of ballots in the 2012 presidential primaries.

To that end, the Brady Campaign has compiled a new report, *Gunslinger: Rick Perry's Reckless Record on Guns*, that looks at 10 of the most extreme examples of Gov. Perry's rhetoric on guns and five examples of dangerous legislation that Perry supported and signed into law as Texas governor.

For four years running, Texas, of all states, has been the chief supplier of illegal guns recovered in crimes in Mexico, according to ATF trace data.¹ Many thousands of Texas guns, predominantly high-powered, military-style assault rifles like the AK-47, are helping to arm Mexican drug cartels and are being used to murder Mexican children, women, and men – killing up to 50,000 in recent years.

Given Texas' proximity to Mexico and the reality that weak gun laws make it easier for dangerous people to get and use guns, Gov. Perry ought to be spearheading support for solutions to decrease gun deaths and stem illegal gun trafficking. But quite to the contrary, he has supported a flood of wrongheaded, risky proposals, such as allowing loaded guns in elementary schools, forcing them onto college campuses and workplaces, allowing gangs to keep loaded guns in their cars and exempting states from conducting the Brady background checks that keep guns out of the hands of felons, domestic abusers, and the dangerously mentally ill. He has never met an NRA gun bill that he didn't like, support, or sign into law (19 to date), and it's these kinds of dangerous policies that characterize his record as Governor of Texas and punctuate our report, *Gunslinger: Rick Perry's Reckless Record on Guns*.

Gov. Perry operates not only outside the mainstream of American presidential leadership, he operates outside the mainstream of his own party. His predecessor, former President George Bush, backed a federal ban on deadly assault weapons and high-capacity assault clips.

Republican and Democratic Presidents in the modern era have supported reasonable gun restrictions. In addition to President George W. Bush, his father, President George H.W. Bush, signed an Executive Order to ban the importation of military-style assault weapons. Ronald Reagan weighed in in favor of the Brady Law. On the Democratic side, President Obama has supported renewed restrictions on assault weapons. President Clinton signed into law the Brady Bill and the federal Assault Weapon Ban.

In Rick Perry, such moderation remains decidedly elusive.

While most of the GOP presidential contenders call themselves “supporters of the Second Amendment,” past presidents and governors have demonstrated that supporting the Second Amendment is perfectly compatible with gun laws designed to save American lives.

Rick Perry, it seems, prefers to walk on the reckless side. This now is a problem for the state of Texas. Tomorrow, it may be a problem for our nation.

RICK PERRY'S RHETORIC

10 Reasons to be Alarmed by the Gun Views of the GOP Presidential Candidate

- 1. A Gun-in-the-Pocket President?:** Governor Perry appears to be the kind of politician who takes lightly the dangers of carrying loaded guns into public spaces, even at emotionally charged and congested political events. When asked if he carries a concealed weapon while he campaigns, Perry refused to answer outright. Instead, he thought it was a joking matter, replying, "That's why it's called concealed."²
- 2. A Shoot 'Em Up State of Mind:** Governor Perry's mind seems always to be on shooting. He believes that's the American way and suggests it's a good thing that he and other Texans are always ready for a shootout: any day, anytime, anywhere. From his autobiography, *Fed Up!*, Perry boasts: "Texans, on the other hand, elect folks like me. You know the type, the kind of guy who goes jogging in the morning, packing a Ruger .380 with laser sights and loaded with hollow-point bullets, and shoots a coyote that is threatening his daughter's dog. We like that our law-abiding citizens carry guns down here."³

Perry explained that he carries his .380 Ruger -- loaded with hollow-point bullets -- when jogging on trails because he's scared of snakes. But when a coyote came out of the brush toward his daughter's Labrador retriever, Perry charged. "Don't attack my dog, or you might get shot . . . if you're a coyote," he said to a reporter. The laser pointer on his gun helped make a quick, clean kill."⁴

The Governor left the coyote where it fell. "He became mulch," Perry said."⁵
- 3. Guns for Grade School:** If Rick Perry had his way, there would be no such thing as a gun-free school zone in America. In 2008, Perry suggested that it was a good idea for school teachers, even those who teach kindergarten, to carry lethal weapons. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, "Gov. Rick Perry said Monday that he supported the Harrold School District policy to allow teachers and staff members to carry guns at school as long as they are adequately trained in gun safety."⁶
- 4. "YES" to Guns on College Campuses:** In the Governor's mind, there is nothing wrong with adding loaded guns to the mix of drinking, drugs, emotional distress and anxiety that accompanies life on a college campus. "There are already guns on campus. All too often they are illegal," Republican Gov. Rick Perry said. "I want there to be legal guns on campus. I think it makes sense...."⁷ Guns on campus legislation is highly unpopular in Texas and around the country. Legislation to force colleges and universities to allow guns on campus has been defeated 63 times in 32 states since 2007, including in two consecutive legislative sessions in Texas. A poll in Texas by the *American Statesmen* in January of 2011 showed that 67 percent of registered voters oppose the carrying of guns on campus.⁸ Furthermore, by a vote of 57 percent to 43 percent, the Texas A&M student body rejected the idea of concealed guns on campus.⁹ Texas A&M is Rick Perry's alma mater and is considered one of the more conservative campuses in Texas.
- 5. Dismantling Federal Gun Laws:** In his book *Fed Up!*, Governor Perry asserts that Congress lacked the power to enact the 1968 Gun Control Act, the cornerstone federal gun law that bars firearm sales to felons, domestic abusers, and the dangerously mentally ill. Under his theory, which has been rejected by the courts, vital federal gun laws, from the ban on fully automatic machine guns to the Brady background check law, which has blocked 2 million dangerous people from buying guns, would all be unconstitutional. And, in an assault on the most fundamental concepts of federalism, Governor Perry has even said that states have the power to "opt out" of federal gun laws they don't

like. He supports laws such as Montana's "Firearms Freedom Act" – struck down by a federal court last year – that purports to exempt "Made in Montana" guns from basic federal gun laws such as requirements that guns be stamped with serial numbers to allow crime guns to be traced, that guns be made so that they cannot evade metal detectors, and that semi-automatic handguns not be sold to children.¹⁰

6. **Gun Rights for Gangs:** Gov. Perry seems determined to be the criminal's best friend, especially a gang criminal who needs to have a gun under the driver's seat for the occasional drive-by shooting. Perry signed a bill into law allowing people to carry loaded guns in their cars without a permit. "It's insane," says one Dallas officer, who asked not to be named. "They basically destroyed the concealed gun law. We're letting drug dealers with Glocks under the seat go and say have a nice day. In the past we could have charged them at least with a weapons violation and confiscated the gun. Texas is wide open now."¹¹
7. **Trampling Private Property Rights:** Gov. Perry signed a bill into law that tramples private property rights and forces large employers and small businesses to allow loaded guns, including AK-47s and Uzis, in parked cars on their property. The bill was opposed by business groups including the Technology Association of America, Texas Association of Business and the Texas Chemical Council. The new law took effect on September 1, 2011.
8. **A Gun Salesman, Too:** Gov. Perry doesn't just love to carry his gun. He seems to get an extra kick out of promoting gun sales and instructing on how even an untrained and inexperienced shooter can hit a "target." Speaking at a Dallas gun store last year, Perry became animated while handling a Ruger LCP handgun, and excitedly explained, "I will highly recommend that you put the crimson laser sight on it. I'm thinking you may not have had that much experience, so I'm going to help you out a little bit. You just shoot where the dot is."¹²
9. **Perry's Concealed Gun Marketing Plan:** There's no rest for the Governor's trigger-happy finger. There shouldn't be any for ordinary Americans, either, he seems to believe. You can never tell when your dog will be attacked by a vicious coyote. "It's another reason you should get your concealed handgun license now. Get it before it's too late, brother," Perry cautioned.¹³
10. **Gun Trafficking Crackdown:** Governor Perry opposes even modest measures to help law enforcement crack down on gun smuggling from the U.S. to Mexico. For example, he criticized the Justice Department's new reporting rules for gun dealers in border states, which are designed to help federal agents interdict trafficking and confiscate illegal guns before they get to the border. Perry derided the new rules as "misguided" and "constitutionally questionable." The new requirements from ATF simply mandate that gun dealers in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California notify the Department of Justice of multiple semi-automatic rifle sales, including sales of military-style assault rifles, to track and catch gun traffickers more quickly.¹⁴

RICK PERRY'S RECORD

His Pledge Of Allegiance To The Gun Lobby

As Governor of Texas, Rick Perry signed every NRA-backed bill into law that came across his desk. Because of his allegiance to the NRA, he received an "A+" rating from the group in his last two campaigns for Governor. In all, he signed 19 NRA-backed bills into law. Below are five examples of those that pose great risk to public safety.

2011 Texas Legislative Session

SB 321: Forces employers and private property owners to allow employees to store loaded firearms in their motor vehicles while parked at work. This new law tramples the private property rights of employers who should be able to determine for themselves whether to allow loaded guns on their premises. The new law took effect September 1, 2011.

2007 Texas Legislative Session

HB 991: Keeps secret from the public the records of Concealed Handgun Licenses (CHL). This law prevents public access to concealed license holder information and will prevent independent agencies from evaluating how well the system of licensing of concealed carriers is working. The public has a right to know how the CHL system is working to ensure that dangerous people, including felons, are not getting permits to carry loaded guns in public.

SB 378: This law allows people in public to "shoot first and ask questions later." The law shields shooters from civil action, even if they kill or injure innocent bystanders. The law was absolutely unnecessary, as laws to provide for self-defense were already in place.

HB 1815: Allows Texas motorists to transport a loaded handgun in their vehicle without a Concealed Handgun License (CHL). This law puts an unfair burden on Texas police officers to determine whether someone with a loaded gun in their car is a prohibited person.

2001 Texas Legislative Session

SB 430: Legislation that would help to promote the introduction of the NRA's "Eddie the Eagle" program in Texas public schools. In fact, the NRA stated in an alert to their members in 2001 that this new law would get their controversial program introduced into some of the larger Texas public school systems.¹⁵ The evidence shows that the program may actually cause young children to be interested in handling guns, precisely the opposite of its claimed effect.¹⁶

ENDNOTES

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¹² Gromer Jeffers, Jr., *Texas Gov. Rick Perry Picks Up Endorsements From NRA, Texas State Rifle Association*, available at: <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/texas-legislature/headlines/20100917-Texas-Gov-Rick-Perry-picks-8832.ece>, DALLAS MORNING NEWS, September 17, 2010.

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¹⁵ NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION, *Texas Legislative Update - End Of Session Wrap Up 6/5/01*, available at: <http://www.nraila.org/Legislation/Read.aspx?id=69>, June 5, 2001.

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