



ONE ON ONE
WITH KANSAS
REP. TODD TIAHRT

Eye Of The Storm

Rep. Tiahrt, whose efforts to protect undercover police officers and operations through his Tiahrt Amendment have won him the ire of anti-gun NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg, tells NRANews.com "Daily News" host **Ginny Simone** the importance of his embattled legislation, and the true motivations behind Bloomberg's efforts to quash it.

Simone: We've been covering New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg on NRANews.com since last summer, when he began talking about repealing your amendment, the Tiahrt Amendment. You're now coming out talking about this. He says it's all about public safety. How do you see it?

Rep. Tiahrt: I see this along two avenues as far as Mayor Bloomberg is concerned. One is that he has an agenda—a gun control agenda—and he's very passionate about it. He sees this as a way he can try to control the firearms industry. So this is one avenue. The second one is that I think he has some political ambitions above the mayor of New York. He's a very wealthy man; his company is worth about \$20 billion. He's made public statements that he would be willing to spend at least a billion dollars in a presidential bid should he choose to run as an Independent, so I think he's trying to strategize a "blue state" sort of approach to where gun control might be popular in big cities and he could get a basis for his presidential campaign. So it's putting politics above the protection of our police officers, especially those working undercover. The whole reason for this language was to try to protect undercover officers, try to protect those avenues that they have of catching illegal gun dealers and criminals, by working undercover to set up firearm dealers who make straw transactions and put them in jail.

Simone: When Mayor Bloomberg's office said you caused the impasse—because I guess you were talking about working out some things with the amendment—I thought it really hit the nail on the head. When they talked about how it

could cripple the city's efforts to sue gun dealers across the country, that's really the reason he wants access to this gun trace data, isn't it?

Rep. Tiahrt: Yeah, it's not about catching criminals for Bloomberg. It's about going after the firearm industry and dealers who are legally licensed and selling a legal product. And this is sort of the basis. He has been willing to go outside the law to further his means. He hired private investigators from New York City and sent them down into Virginia to try to buy guns illegally so he could use it in a civil lawsuit. And it's been such a disruption in Virginia that the legislature has passed laws that say that this is illegal. On top of that, he's stepped on the toes of BATFE (Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives), or ATF as we commonly know it, because they have undercover investigations going, and he has disrupted as many as 18 investigations—legitimate investigations—with his sending out of private investigators, trying to do this vigilante style.

Simone: Yet Bloomberg received a letter from DOJ (Department of Justice) saying that if his office kept this up it would face legal liabilities. When you listen to his office, though, it sounds like they believe they can do whatever they want; DOJ can send the letters, and it's almost like (Bloomberg) thinks he is above the law—if he has to continue doing it, he's going to do it.

Rep. Tiahrt: And isn't that interesting. A man who wants to be the president of the United States is willing to send his minions out to break the law to further his own political means. That's a very disturbing thought, that what Bloomberg's trying to do is break the law so that he can get his way in civil court.

Simone: You talk about the police

department and how Bloomberg says that this hasn't affected any cases, yet he goes and calls the FOP (Fraternal Order of Police) a "fringe organization." It's like he's trying to protect police, but at the same time he sure doesn't gain credibility with them by saying what he's saying.

Rep. Tiahrt: Well, Bloomberg has named as his supporters different mayors across the nation that he has sort of leveraged into this. He's also named a bunch of police organizations, but when you add all the members up of these pseudo police organizations, and some of them are just websites, the Fraternal Order of Police has more police officers joining them than the sum

“ A man who wants to be the president of the United States is willing to send his minions out to break the law to further his own political means. ”

total of all his groups. So they're by far the largest organization, and they do have in their best interest the protection of police officers. They're the ones who are supporting this legislation. I received a letter from them again this year that says, "We would like you to renew this legislation."

Simone: We've seen several mayors from across the country pull out of Bloomberg's anti-gun coalition because of what he's done on this whole Tiahrt Amendment—your amendment—issue, and then we saw TV stations in your home state of Kansas saying they would not run his ad because it's not truthful. Do you think the word's getting out about what he's all about?

Continued on page 44

One On One

from page 25

Rep. Tiaht: Well, I hope so. He's really gone beyond truth and fairness in this. I think those ads were extremely misleading. They were absolutely inaccurate, and they made false accusations and charges against me, which I take personally, of course. But this is not a good way to get things done. It's like he's trying to bully his way through this. The world of Congress is where the laws are written. It takes 218 people to get anything done on the floor of the House. It also has to go through committee, and all that has to be scheduled by the party that's in control. And right now I have no control over the floor schedule. I don't even have any control over when the committees are going to meet. So for the mayor to come approach me in January, which is when I first met with him, and insist on something being done immediately, it just cannot physically or politically happen in this town in that fashion. So he's worked outside the system, which is typical—it's similar to what he's done with the private investigators by sending them to Virginia to try to buy guns illegally to use in civil lawsuits. That type of approach is something that's not going to be effective. And I think that as people understand where he's going, what his motives are, he'll lose support for his efforts.

Simone: I was curious, because you actually did meet with Mayor Bloomberg and his staff to talk about the amendment. What happened? How did things break down?

Rep. Tiaht: It was a very cordial meeting, and we talked about areas where we could probably find common ground. There was some aggregate trace data that was released by region that I was willing to work with him on, so that took some clarification language. And we were working actively on that until about a week before the ads started in Wichita. We thought things

were progressing, my office was in contact with his office almost on a weekly basis, but it was clear that he was moving toward a different objective. And I called him before the ads started and said, "Why are you doing this? This is not the way things work here. Maybe you need a lobbyist or somebody to explain how this works." And he said, "Oh, I just think you're stonewalling me. We should be getting this stuff done and it's not happening. So I think these ads will put pressure on Congress." I explained that's not how it works here. So we sort of left it—we agreed to disagree.

We have been reaching out to work with them. But it's just very clear that he's moving toward a different agenda than what I can agree to, which is he wants to sue manufacturers. And right now, one of the reasons that we're losing American jobs is because our legal industry is taking many companies, especially manufacturing companies, to task over the design and building of their products. ... Wichita, Kan., has a lot of aircraft industry—we're the air capital of the world. It took an act of Congress to limit liability on airplanes before we could reignite the industry. It was about to falter, to end. But by putting some commonsense restrictions on manufacturing liability, we were able to get the industry regenerated. And his direction is to increase the liability insurance, increase the cost and try to run some manufacturers out of business by the sheer weight of lawsuits. I just think that's the wrong thing to do for American jobs, the wrong thing to do for our national security, and it's certainly not the way things should happen in this country.

Simone: Congressman, we have talked to some of these gun dealers who have settled, and some were actually suing Bloomberg and taking him to court. And they said, "We didn't settle because we did anything wrong, although that's the

picture Bloomberg wants to paint. We just couldn't afford the legal battle." And the mayor knows that, don't you think?

Rep. Tiaht: Sure. He's using government resources to take them to court, and they're small businessmen. They can't afford to offset the billions of dollars that New York City has in its annual budget. And that's the kind of country that we do not want to have, where the federal government goes after small private businessmen based on a political agenda. I think that's a recipe for disaster. It's certainly a recipe for losing jobs. But it's a big, oppressive government going after the small guy, who's paying all the taxes. And that's just wrong.

Simone: And Bloomberg says the reason you're doing this is all about the NRA, and it's all about your ties to the NRA and the industry.

Rep. Tiaht: Well, I think it's about protecting police officers. I've been a member of the NRA—I was a Lifetime member before I got involved in politics—but this is about protecting police officers, it's about protecting undercover officers and it's about making sure we don't get abused by the government.

Simone: Do you see this going away anytime soon?

Rep. Tiaht: I think as his true plans become revealed, his support is going to wane. But he's got plenty of resources, he's off on his own political agenda, so I see it continuing for some time. But I think that Americans who believe in constitutional rights, who have a sense of right and wrong, ought to stand firm on this and not be put in a position where they're abused by somebody who's willing to take his government resources and his personal resources and work against small private sector businessmen and women in this world, or in this country, who are trying to make a living and pay taxes. ☐