

Gun lobby fires shot for 'free speech'.

Level 2 | Intermediate

1 Key words

Fill the gaps using these key words from the text:

launch	circumvent	campaign	nebulous
militia	warped	lobby	firearms

1. _____ is another word for 'guns'.
2. If you _____ something, you avoid it or get round it.
3. If a version of something is _____, it is extremely inaccurate.
4. To _____ a new product or service means to start selling or operating it.
5. A _____ is a series of actions intended to produce political or social change.
6. If a group of people _____ politicians or other people in authority, they try to influence them on a particular subject.
7. If something is _____, it is extremely unclear.
8. A _____ is a group of ordinary people who are trained as soldiers.

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find this information as quickly as possible:

1. What does NRA stand for?
2. How many gun-owners are there in the USA?
3. How many listeners can NRA News reach?
4. What does the first amendment protect?
5. What is the second amendment?
6. Who owns CNN?

Gun lobby fires shot for 'free speech'.

Level 2 | Intermediate

Gun Lobby fires shot for 'free speech'.

American talk radio stations are usually somewhere on the right of the political spectrum but recently a new station was launched which is clearly right-wing. The station is owned and operated by the National Rifle Association, a group which openly supports the USA's 80 million gun owners. NRA News, which began broadcasting pro-firearms programmes last week, has been criticised as a clear attempt to circumvent new US laws which limit political campaigning.

The new laws severely limit the ability of special interest groups like the NRA to buy advertising to argue in favour of a particular candidate. But the NRA says the radio station makes it a media organisation, so its broadcasts are journalism - not advertisements. A few minutes after the station started broadcasting the NRA's executive vice-president, Wayne LaPierre, told listeners: "The great thing about the United States of America is that anyone can walk into a radio studio and say they are a journalist."

The broadcasts were launched via satellite and reach 400,000 listeners. According to Mr

LaPierre, politicians in Washington wanted "some nebulous agency" to decide who could and who could not broadcast. This was a threat to the freedom of speech, he added. The first amendment to the American constitution protects the freedom of speech. Up to now the NRA has been more concerned with the second amendment: the right to own and carry guns.

The NRA understands the second amendment to be an individual right, while opponents of the second amendment say it refers only to the US military or to American militias which existed many years ago. Mr LaPierre said he hoped that NRA News would be "a shot heard round the world". Due to a lack of money, however, the station will only broadcast for three hours a day at first. Mr LaPierre complained that the US media's reporting of the firearms industry was "warped". He promised that his radio station would be "balanced, objective and the truth".

This view probably surprised some listeners when they heard what followed: a fierce attack on the Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, and an interview with a college student who had received a C grade for writing a pro-gun essay.

"They're trying to get round the law," said Robert Ricker, a former lobbyist for the firearms industry who changed sides and now works for an anti-gun campaign group.

The NRA was simply trying to get publicity, said Mr Ricker. "Do you think John Kerry could suddenly say he was a journalist, start his own newspaper and then say he was a news outlet instead of a candidate for president?" he said. "The NRA was formed to get involved in elections and to lobby Congress. I think the American people are intelligent enough to work out what the NRA is doing."

The NRA, on the other hand, points out that many news organisations are owned by big business. CNN is owned by Time Warner, ABC by Disney and NBC by General Electric, for example. "These big companies often contribute to political campaigns but they are still able to keep their news source," said Kelly Hobbs, an NRA spokeswoman.

The Guardian Weekly 20-04-06, page 6

Gun lobby fires shot for 'free speech'.

Level 2 | Intermediate

3 Comprehension check

Decide whether the following sentences are True or False:

1. The NRA defends the right of people to own and carry guns.
2. The NRA says its radio station advertises and does not engage in journalism.
3. The NRA says the new laws on political campaigning are a threat to the freedom of speech.
4. The NRA believes individuals should be able to own and carry guns.
5. The NRA supports the democratic presidential candidate John Kerry.
6. Opponents of the NRA say it is trying to circumvent the law.

4 Vocabulary - find the word

1. Find an expression which means the opposite of 'left-wing'.
2. Find an adverb which is the opposite of 'secretly'.
3. Find an expression which is the opposite of 'pro-gun'.
4. Find an adverb which is the opposite of 'slightly'.
5. Find a 3-word expression which means 'a group with special interests'.
6. Find an adjective which means 'considering all arguments and opinions fairly and equally'.

5 Vocabulary - prepositions

Fill the gaps using an appropriate preposition:

1. The new laws limit advertising _____ favour of a particular candidate.
2. Anyone can walk _____ a radio station and say they're a journalist.
3. The NRA says the new laws are a threat _____ the freedom of speech.
4. They broadcast a fierce attack _____ the Democratic presidential candidate.
5. The NRA was formed to get involved _____ elections.
6. Big companies often contribute _____ political campaigns.

Check your answers in the text

Gun lobby fires shot for 'free speech'.

Level 2 | Intermediate

6 Grammar focus - reported speech

Look at this sentence from the text:

He promised that his radio station would be "balanced..."

His direct words were:

"My radio station will be balanced..."

Now report these statements by the NRA spokesman in the same way, using the verb in brackets.

1. "We will present the truth". [PROMISE]
2. "I hope NRA news will be a shot heard around the world". [SAY]
3. "We will defend the right of people to own guns". [PROMISE]
4. "The US media's reporting of the firearms industry is "warped". [COMPLAIN]
5. "NRA News is a media organisation". [SAY]
6. "Many news companies are owned by big business". [POINT OUT]

7 Discussion

Make a list of points for and against individuals having the right to own and carry firearms.