

dangers, and “each case [is] to be judged on its own merits by medical and rabbinical counseling.” But Riskin is explicit: “When no mitigating circumstances exist, and the proposed abortion proves to be only a desire to get rid of an inconvenience, Jewish law . . . clearly forbids the taking of potential life.”

That is, pure and simple, the view of Judaism on abortion on demand, feticide, “pro-choice,” and a variety of other issues concerning the sanctity of life. Judaism is a life-affirming religious tradition maintaining that the human being is “in God’s image” not only after emerging from the womb but from the 40th day within the womb. That position is not identical to the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox view, but it is entirely congruent. Accordingly, when we hear that “Judaism” affirms the “right” of women to abort their babies, the correct theological response is simple: Some, perhaps many, Jews may take that position, but the authoritative voice of Judaism—the Torah as mediated by the great sages through time—recognizes no

such right, because the Torah affirms life, and, specifically and explicitly, the right to life of the fetus in the womb.

The 20th century was marked by death on a cosmopolitan scale. We Jews, of course, have suffered disproportionately (or so it seems to us; the Cambodians have good reason to disagree, as do the Armenians). With one million dead on the Marne and two million before Verdun, with seven million starved to death in the Ukraine and 20 million Soviet citizens dead in World War II (not to mention the millions of Chinese wantonly killed by the Japanese during World War II and the hundreds of thousands of Japanese who died in atomic explosions and the millions more who died in battle)—the list goes on and on—with all that killing, one mass murder more or less will scarcely make the case more persuasive. The affirmation of life in the face of death should define the critical existential task.

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## Letter From Hawaii

by *Brandon Bosworth*

### Confiscate 'Em, Dano!



Hawaii is a liberal state. Despite being heavily Catholic, it was the first state to legalize abortion. There is no death penalty, or even life sentences. Labor unions still wield considerable power. The Democratic Party enjoys one of its most solid majorities in the country. Most of the few Republicans in elected office are barely to the right of the Democrats.

But there is discontent in the air.

The first sign of rebellion came in the wake of the state supreme court decision that opened the door for possible gay “marriages.” The court ruled that the state constitution did not bar these unions. If Hawaii wanted to continue to recognize only marriages between a man and a woman, the law would have to be changed or clarified. The legislature was squeamish about changing the constitution, and there were the usual accusations of “homophobia” and “bigotry” directed at those who defended traditional marriages. The politicians thought that the enlightened people of Hawaii would support granting new rights to homosexuals. They were wrong.

In 1998, the issue was put on the ballot. Voters were asked if the legislature should change the wording of the constitution to ensure that marriage remained a heterosexual institution. Despite Hawaii’s reputation for “tolerance” and all the money that poured in from out-of-state gay activists to defeat the initiative, over 75 percent of voters favored amending the law to recognize only traditional marriages.

Over the past year, the state legislature has further provoked popular anger. One concerned lawmaker, apparently under the misguided impression that state employees are under too much stress, proposed a law mandating snack and nap time for local public-sector workers. Although Hawaii is historically very pro-union (which made the quest for statehood that much harder during the Red Scare of the 1950’s), the letters sections of Honolulu’s two daily newspapers were swamped with correspondence from an-

### Crackpots

by *Gail White*

I have a friend who wants to restore the Czar.  
Seriously. As if this burst of love  
would turn the empty streets of Petersburg  
into a set for Boris Godunov.

He thinks a royalist Russia would delight  
in festivals, would never drop the bomb.  
And you can find him on the internet  
at getaczar dot com.

How to protect my friend, who might have been  
a national treasure once, almost a saint?  
I only wish there were an NEA  
with grants for the incorrigibly quaint,

or Shelters for the Harmlessly Obsessed  
(unworldly, therefore not completely sane).  
Without its nest, the Great or Common Crackpot  
may never breed again.

gry readers ridiculing the ludicrous proposal.

Another bill sought to make organ-harvesting *mandatory*. Even the director of Hawaii's organ bank was appalled. Again, a flood of letters protested the bill. If the state can take your body parts, what *can't* it claim? Does liberty mean anything to would-be heart and eye grabbers?

Apparently not. In that same session, the Hawaii legislature was filled with proposals for restrictive and unconstitutional gun laws. Much to the surprise of lawmakers, Hawaii's supporters of the Second Amendment got angry—and for good reason.

Consider the following proposals: Mandatory re-registration of firearms every five years; mandatory "safe-storage" of all firearms in a commercial gun safe; forcing medical personnel to provide the police chief with the names of patients seeking psychiatric care or counseling so the chief could confiscate the patients' guns (doctor-patient privilege, anyone?); restricting ammunition sales to those who can prove they have a legally registered firearm in that particular caliber; banning individuals who have sold a gun from buying a new one for ten years; creating a "firearm-owner identification card"; and, of course, outlawing the sale and ownership of all handguns. It was enough to make Sen. Charles Schumer take out an NRA membership.

A bill to make it easier for citizens to carry concealed weapons was also introduced, but it went nowhere. Technically, Hawaii has concealed-carry permits, but they are only issued to civilians at the discretion of their local police chief. About a dozen people in the islands—out of a population of over one million—have a permit.

Most of the gun-control bills were introduced in response to a shooting spree at the Honolulu Xerox building. Yet the only proposed legislation that could have prevented the Xerox killings was the bill liberalizing the issuance of concealed-carry permits. Even with the Xerox incident, gun deaths are rare in Hawaii. The state ranks 49th in overall gun deaths and 44th in firearm-related homicides. In any given year, about 24 people are murdered in Hawaii; about six of those homicides are committed with a gun.

Hawaiian gunowners have been through this before. A previous attempt to ban handguns in the early 1990's was defeated, but a law was passed making it mandatory for anyone buying a handgun

to go through a minimum of six hours of training. The waiting period for handgun purchases in Hawaii is two weeks. The ten-round capacity limit on semi-automatic pistols was in effect long before the Brady Bill. All new guns are registered with the state.

Despite all the laws restricting the right of Hawaii's people to keep and bear arms, the state has a very lively firearms community. On any weekend, you can go to the Koko Head public shooting range and find sportsmen from every walk of life. It is always busy, and you can easily wait an hour for a firing line to open up. All of the state's prestigious private schools, such as Kamehameha, St. Louis, and Punahou, have teams that compete in small-bore rifle tournaments. Apparently, someone at these schools understands that a child with a gun in his hand is not always a psychotic monster.

Tourists who never venture far beyond Waikiki don't realize how rural large parts of Hawaii are. Go to an outer island like Kauai or the Big Island, and you will see farms and old pickup trucks with "Keep the Country Country!" bumper stickers. Better yet, go to Molokai, an island with no fast-food restaurants, no traffic lights, and just a single stop sign. People live off the land, and that often means venturing into the mountains, hunting for game birds, mountain sheep, or the wild boars Hawaii is known for. The same can be said for those Oahuans who live far from the hustle and bustle, in places like Makaha or the North Shore. Not everyone who throws a luau buys his pork from Safeway, and not everyone lives in a Honolulu high-rise where gun ownership is *déclassé*.

When the gun-control activists launched their latest attacks, the firearms community defended itself. Republican State Sen. Sam Slom brought in John Lott, author of the definitive *More Guns, Less Crime*, to speak to the legislature about the benefits of concealed-carry laws and the dangers and ineffectiveness of many of the proposed gun-control measures. Renowned civilian and law-enforcement trainer Chuck Taylor sat in on one of the proceedings. (Shocked by the strong anti-gun rhetoric of Honolulu Police Department Major John Kerr, Taylor commented, "You guys got a problem here. It's your cops.") At open hearings, *nine times* as many citizens showed up to oppose the gun-control bills as did to support them. Of course, the Senate Judiciary Committee report described the

anti-gun partisans as "rational and extremely sane" while the pro-gun-rights people were dismissed as "very opinionated." But most letter writers to the *Honolulu Advertiser* and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* supported gun rights, in contrast to the editorial stance of both newspapers.

Did all this work on behalf of the Second Amendment pay off? Amazingly, it did. None of the really repressive gun-control measures became law, and a movement of farmers, blue-collar workers, ex-military personnel, and other everyday citizens defeated a scheme hatched by politicians and bureaucrats. It was a great victory for liberty.

Hawaii's citizens have had to swallow a lot of nonsense over the past 50 years. As the battle over gun rights shows, they might have had their fill.

*Brandon Bosworth calls Aiea, Hawaii—the largest all-vowel city in the United States—home.*

## Letter From the Upper Midwest

by Sean Scallon

### A World Series?



St. Louis Cardinals slugger and home-run record holder Mark McGwire had a bone to pick with Major League Baseball. He was none too happy that the first regular season game of the 2000 campaign, matching the Chicago Cubs and the New York Mets, was played outside the United States—in Japan, no less. The major leagues had sold out for money, McGwire said, in staging the games overseas. Now, there's a surprise.

McGwire was the first athlete in any major professional sport to voice misgivings about playing a regular season game outside the United States. Baseball has joined professional hockey and basketball in forcing regular fans, at least those not prone to insomnia, to wait a day to find out how their teams fared. Pro football has played overseas exhibition games for several years.

But McGwire may be wrong when he