



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION ABOUT ROTARY'S WEAPONS POLICY

During Rotary's January 2017 Board of Director's meeting, modifications were made to Rotary's code regarding the transference of ownership of weapons by Rotary clubs and the sponsorships of Rotary events and use of the Rotary logo by entities manufacturing or selling weapons.

The purpose of this document is to clarify the reason that this decision came to the board, the factors that were considered, and what this policy means.

Why Did the Board of Directors Decide to Affect the Existing Policy?

In December 2015, Rotary staff was contacted by a Rotary club to determine if they could conduct a gun show, and if so, what did they need to do to limit their liability. While there was an existing policy on the sponsorship of guns, weapons and other armament, the policy was not clear. As a result, the RI staff was not able to provide definitive answers to the club of what could and could not be done under the existing policy. Accordingly, the issue was raised to the Board of Directors for review and consideration.

Since that time, the Board and RI staff, including the Risk Management, Communication and Legal teams, gave a lengthy review of the policy, the associated liabilities, use of the Rotary Mark, etc. Also, during the review process, Rotary received a request to allow the use of the Rotary Mark on a firearm which advanced further conversation about how Rotary should engage potential sponsorship and licensing opportunities.

It was for these reasons that the Board of Directors addressed the policy.

Was This Decision Made for Political Effect or Purpose?

No. At no time during the review and decision making process was there any discussion to make this decision for political outcome. It was not done to limit anyone's rights, nor to indicate that the use of weapons is inappropriate. It was done strictly to limit Rotary financial and reputational risk. A key part of the decision was the consideration of what would be Rotary's risk if a weapon that was purchased at a Rotary event was then misused and caused death. The Board's concern was what would be the result in the court of law, or the court of public opinion.

What Was Considered in Making the Decision?

In making this decision, the Board's primary focus was on: 1) The potential financial and reputational liability to clubs and Rotary International; 2) The alignment of the types of sponsorships that are consistent with Rotary's mission.

Who Made This Decision?

The decision was made by the Board of Directors. The Board is an international body comprised of directors from all over the world. Currently, of the 19 members on the Rotary board, there are four directors that are U.S. citizens (21% of the Board). As this was a decision made by an international board, the decision was made without consideration of a political agenda. The issues and politics surrounding the ownership of guns in the U.S. was not a part of the decision. The Board's only consideration was in what they believed was in the best interests of Rotary International.

Why Were Rotary Clubs Not Consulted Over This Policy Change?

The Board, elected by the membership, is entrusted with the authority and obligation to make decisions that it deems to be in the best interest of Rotary. One of the Board's most basic responsibilities is to protect the assets of the association, including what are arguably our most valuable assets, our name and reputation. In fact, there was an existing policy regarding allowable sponsorship involving weapons. The January 2017 board decision only modified and clarified this existing policy. Please note that the Board has historically established policies to which the clubs are bound. Examples of these policies include requiring that every Rotary club in the U.S. must purchase Rotary provided liability insurance, the creation of Rotaract and Interact, etc.). These policy decisions are standard governance practice for associations such as ours.

What Does This Decision Cover?

The policy only address three elements:

- 1) Rotary clubs/districts are not to conduct guns shows or transfer ownership of weapons;
- 2) Rotary clubs/districts and their events cannot be sponsored by weapons companies;
- 3) The Rotary name and logo are not to be used in combination with the name or logo of an entity that primarily manufactures, or is the primary business of selling weapons;
- 4) The Rotary name and logo are not to be used on weapons.

What Areas Does This Decision Not Cover?

This decision does not limit anyone's right to own or use weapons of any kind. Nor does it make any commentary on the use of weapons.

This policy still does not restrict any club from using guns in sporting events (e.g., turkey shoots, fox hunts, skeet shoots, etc.)