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## Ready on the Firing Line

### Gun Groups' Attorney Targets Limits on Right to Bear Arms

By Tom Crowley  
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Those who are opposed to the private possession of firearms might refer to him as a "hired gun." His supporters, on the other hand, consider him a valuable tool in the fight against local governments that they believe have taken aim at the Second Amendment.

What makes Chuck Michel so unusual is that his law practice revolves around guns. He not only defends people involved in firearms violations, he advises cities against enacting what he believes are illegal restrictions on guns.

But as more and more cities are enacting gun restrictions, going to war over the issue can, at times, make Michel feel like an outcast.

"Some cities treat me like a pariah," Michel said, "instead of someone trying to tell them what the law is."

Even though he proclaimed himself a "gun lawyer" in a recent ad inside a pro-firearms group's newsletter, the Los Angeles attorney doesn't appear to fit any particular stereotype.

In fact, the only noteworthy souvenir in Michel's Los Angeles office isn't a Civil War-

era musket or a double-barreled shotgun. Rather, it's the head of an animal—in the form of Mickey Mouse ears that Michel received from attorneys for Walt Disney Co. after he had put in long hours on a trademark infringement suit in Orlando, Fla., several years ago, as an associate with O'Melveny & Myers.

Michel has earned praise from a different type of client over the last three years, although he bristles at the "gun lawyer" moniker. Instead, Michel will tell you that his legal philosophy goes beyond just firearms.

"People should be able to do what they want unless they hurt someone or hurt themselves," Michel said.

#### 'A Lawyer's Dream'

As a longtime believer in the right to bear arms, Michel seems to have found a comfortable niche, no matter how he may get labeled. "It's kind of a lawyer's dream, doing something that you really feel very strongly about," Michel said.

Raised in a rural area of New Jersey,

Michel's experience with guns began when he was young. "My family would have target contests shooting at tin cans off the back porch into a hillside the whole time I was growing up," Michel explained.

One reason he feels so strongly about the right to bear arms is his firm belief that no matter what restrictions governments place on guns—even including an outright ban on private ownership—firearms will always be easily accessible. It is a lesson Michel learned as a youth.

"You can never get all the guns out of the hands of criminals, because guns are just too easy to make," Michel said. "When I was growing up in New Jersey, I learned how to make a zip gun with a rubber band, car antenna, a two-by-four and a couple of nails."

Michel's career as a "gun lawyer" began when he decided to go solo after having worked at O'Melveny for nearly four years. "I wanted more autonomy, and I wanted to have the opportunity to do something I feel strongly about," Michel said. What's more, working at

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CHUCK MICHEL — "If I'm going to be disliked because of my beliefs, then so be it."