

Thomas W. Palmer
6151 NE Vera St.
Portland, OR 97213
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Dear Stephen Smith:

I am a child of Maine. I grew up in the town of Minot, Maine, just about an hour north of Freeport, along the banks of the Little Androscoggin River, on a small family farm that expanded over rolling hills, tracts of forest, and a lot of wide open space. Getting out into the wilderness that surrounded my home was a daily part of my upbringing. I spent countless hours exploring the trees, the fields, getting to know the flora and fauna that surrounded the place I called home. I drew creativity and imagination from the wonders of that tiny piece of land, and it has fostered in me a sense of wonder with the natural world, and a dedication to ensuring that spaces such as that exist in my life and in the the lives of those around me.

Part of my experience as a child was being involved in the culture of stewardship and conservation for the open spaces that Maine is so fondly known for. I was brought up in a family of people who were avid hunters and fishers, who knew and understood the resources that nature could provide us, if we were smart about how we used them. This was not limited to building a deep respect for the animals we caught or hunted, but also to the tools we used to capture these beautiful creatures.

One such tool, of course, was the gun. Family rifles and shotguns that had been in our possession were treated with the utmost respect. They were cleaned, kept safe, and as a child, it was impressed upon me every year, as my mom would pull the blaze orange hat down over my ears to keep my warm while I waited at the end of our driveway for the school bus on those chilly, crispy October and November mornings, that hunting was deadly. Guns were dangerous if not treated with respect and a full understanding of what firing a bullet actually meant.

We often made pilgrimages to your flagship store in Freeport. As a child, I found myself drawn to the trout pond, the preserved trophy animals - deer, bear, moose - and knew, even from a young age, that LL Bean was a hunter's destination. One could browse the shelves and racks in your hunting department and become both fully equipped to spend time in forests tracking and possibly shooting any number of animals, but also full with the knowledge and responsibilities that come with undertaking such a task. Your store did do, and continues to do, a really good job at promoting safety while handling firearms of any type, and I commend you for this.

The reason I'm writing to you today, sir, is to ask about taking that sense of responsibility and safety further, especially with regards to guns and the ongoing spate of violent attacks across our country that involve weapons.

As a seller of guns at your location in Freeport, I have a series of questions that I would like for you to address, if I may:

What is your corporate stance on gun control and gun safety in America today? Why isn't this stance made more prominent on your website, especially on pages related to hunting and clay shooting, both sports which involve the use of firearms? As a consumer who browsed your site, it was not made clear to me.

Am I unable to buy guns through your website directly? This was also not made clear to me as a consumer on your site.

What kinds of corporate policies do you have with regards to the types and kinds of guns that you do sell? What kinds of guns are you selling, what guns have you decided not to sell, and why?

What is LL Bean doing today to promote gun safety, and what could the company be doing further to ensure that the sportspeople of today, and tomorrow, fully understand the deadly responsibility that comes with gun ownership?

Also, and this might be something best addressed in a different letter, but why is LL Bean not listed as a supporter of Maine Pride? This question might seem completely disparate from the previous questions about guns and gun safety, but as the recent massacre in Orlando has proven, the GLBT community is also a target for those who wish to use guns as a way to express their hate. I am an out and proud gay man, who is also an out and proud Mainer by birth, and proud of all of the communities that I grew up in and belong to today. As a pillar of the Maine community that LL Bean is, and has been for over a century, I want to know where your company stands with regards to inclusion and actively making the outdoors a wondrous and safe experience for every member of that community.

I truly appreciate your time, and continue to look forward to taking my LL Bean tent with me on my next adventure into the great outdoors. Your products, and your company, have always stood for what being from Maine is all about.

Sincerely,
Thomas Palmer
Portland, Oregon