

Home Defense Foundation flexes activist muscle

by Danae Columbus, Nov. 9, 2017, in the [Uptown Messenger](#)

Cycle enthusiast Mike Weinberger, who leads twice weekly rides for the Crescent City Cyclists Club and who is the founder of the Home Defense Foundation, is not your average citizen activist. A retired lawyer from Brooklyn, New York who specialized in mechanical engineering liability, Weinberger always held distinct views on how government should operate. “Citizens should try to make a difference,” said Weinberger, who moved to New Orleans in 2007 after first visiting here years earlier on a month-long motorcycle trip.

With strong views on limited government, taxpayer rights, personal freedom, government responsibility and self defense, Weinberger originally decided to use his time and abilities to help his friends and neighbors in 2013, when Marigny homeowner Merritt Landry was arrested for shooting an intruder who was trying to break into his house at 2AM. Landry had a pregnant wife and a baby to protect, and when he was arrested the Home Defense Foundation sprung to life.

“Homeowners and taxpayers must step up our activism and get the right to defend ourselves,” Weinberger explained. “I did not own a firearm when I moved to New Orleans, but by 2011, I realized crime was so bad that if you didn’t protect yourself, the chances of a police officer being close enough to actually protect you if a criminal was about to attack was almost zero. Basically, we have to defend ourselves,” said Weinberger.

Weinberger quickly reached out to like-minded individuals and formed a citizen lobbying, outreach, and firearm safety education network that four years later has 700 active members and a Board of Advisors including Reps Cameron Henry and Julie Stokes, and former State Senator Elbert Guillory, among others.

The Foundation became active on the Baton Rouge legislative front in 2014 and was a driving force in the rewriting of self defense, home defense and anti carjacking legislation. Thereafter, Weinberger was invited to attend the new legislation’s signing with Governor Jindal.

In 2016 they fought legislation that would have made it illegal to carry a defensive firearm on government owned land that can be used for recreational purposes, and in 2017 they supported the Castle Doctrine, which presumes a homeowner can use a firearm as a legal self defense measure during a home invasion.

“I’m not an inside baseball political guy,” said Weinberger. “On the contrary, my friends and I work as citizen volunteers at the grassroots level. We advocate that neighbors should teach neighbors about home and self defense and that we should organize so that our voices are heard.”

Dozens of prominent elected officials and key stakeholders in the community have addressed the Foundation’s monthly meetings held at the Morning Call Coffee Shop in City Park on the first Tuesday of every month. Speakers have included Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser, Councilmember Stacy Head, DA Leon Cannizzaro, State Rep. Stephanie Hilferty, Councilmember-elect Joe Giarrusso, and State Senator Danny Martiny.

The Foundation also had contact with three mayoral candidates – Desiree Charbonnet, Michael Bagneris and Troy Henry. Judicial candidates such as Nicole Sheppard have also spoken at their meetings, which now draw up to 100 attendees each month.

Firearm safety is an important component of every home defense class the group teaches, all of which are free. The classes, which are designed for people with little or no experience with firearms, are held in Arabi.

The number of people who own personal firearms is growing every day. Citizens want to be safe and will protect themselves, especially if police cannot. Organizations like the Home Defense Foundation provide much needed education and training at no cost to participants. “It is important for New Orleans elected officials to see that our members – the homeowners and taxpayers of Orleans Parish – are organized and ready,” concluded Weinberger.