

Robert P. Astorino
County Executive

January 15, 2013

Ms. Janet Hasson, President & Publisher
Journal News
Suite N110
1333 Westchester Ave.
White Plains, NY 10604

Dear Janet:

I am writing to ask that you immediately shut down the interactive map of pistol permit holders that is currently up on your website, LoHud.com. My request is based on public safety concerns and basic common sense.

The right of the Journal News to publish is protected by the First Amendment. The Journal News also had the right to request the information from the Westchester County Clerk's office under the Freedom of Information Act. Whether the county clerk should have complied with the initial request is debatable. But simply because the right to do something exists does not necessarily make it right to do.

From the beginning, I've said publicly that the action by the Journal News to indiscriminately publish personal information about thousands of law-abiding citizens was misguided. It demonized individuals who did nothing wrong, violated their privacy and potentially put them and their families – especially victims of domestic violence and current and former judges and law enforcement officials – in harm's way.

Whatever your purpose in publishing the map, surely three weeks time was enough to make your point. Constitutional rights – even those protected by the First Amendment – are not absolute. In this case the line has been crossed. The issue is no longer protecting speech but rather protecting the public, including employees of the Journal News. The time has come to take the map down.

My request is one that I believe also has the support of many in the journalism community. Al Tompkins, a senior faculty member of the Poynter Institute, one of nation's leading journalism schools, said, "Just because information is public does not make it newsworthy. People own guns for a wide range of law-abiding reasons. If you are not breaking the law, there is no compelling reason to publish the data."

For the safety and welfare of our citizenry, I implore you once again to delete the information from your website. Taking down the map would be in the public's interest, which your newspaper is in the business to serve.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Astorino
Westchester County Executive

Office of the County Executive