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Letter to the Editor, Appleton Post Crescent:

After a short vacation, I came home and read the article about two men on their way to the Appleton farmers market with AR15s strapped to their backs. It's very unfortunate that an event anyone would expect to be peaceful, open and safe, was marred by two people who take the exercise of their rights to an extreme.

The market is a great way to spend a Saturday morning with your family. It's unconscionable that these guys think our farmers market is the right place to brandish their Second Amendment rights by openly carrying rifles. Yes, it's their right. Does that make this behavior wise or reasonable? No.

I've noticed that increasingly many people feel just because they have the right to do something, they should do it all the time, everywhere, without engaging their common sense. The old adage, "Just because you can doesn't mean you should," applies to this type of situation.

As a strong supporter of the Second Amendment and our entire Bill of Rights, I don't want to overreact, but this makes me think of the protesters at the State Capitol. For two and a half years, they have disrupted the daily business of the building where people visit and over 500 people work. Families and workers are disturbed by the protesters or, at the least, intimidated by their shouting and frequent bullying.

In both cases, people are exercising rights, but they disregard reasonable parameters. In the Capitol, groups must request a free permit and the protesters refuse to do this. At the farmers market, these men were within their rights, but openly carrying rifles is inappropriate, foolish, and invites concern because we don't know who they are and what they intend to do. You can't blame folks for thinking the worst, when the worst is what we read and see nationwide.

It is important for people to speak out and let those who act irresponsibly know how we feel. We have the right to express our outrage when those folks choose to exercise their rights in such a selfish way.

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As a legislator, I don't know that I can write laws fast enough to keep up with people who aren't prepared to utilize their common sense along with their rights. Whether it's First Amendment or Second Amendment rights, at the end of the day our system of government can only work if the vast majority of our society is predisposed to act in a responsible way.

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