



NEWSLETTER

Editor: Kirsten Meredith

The NRA's Defeat

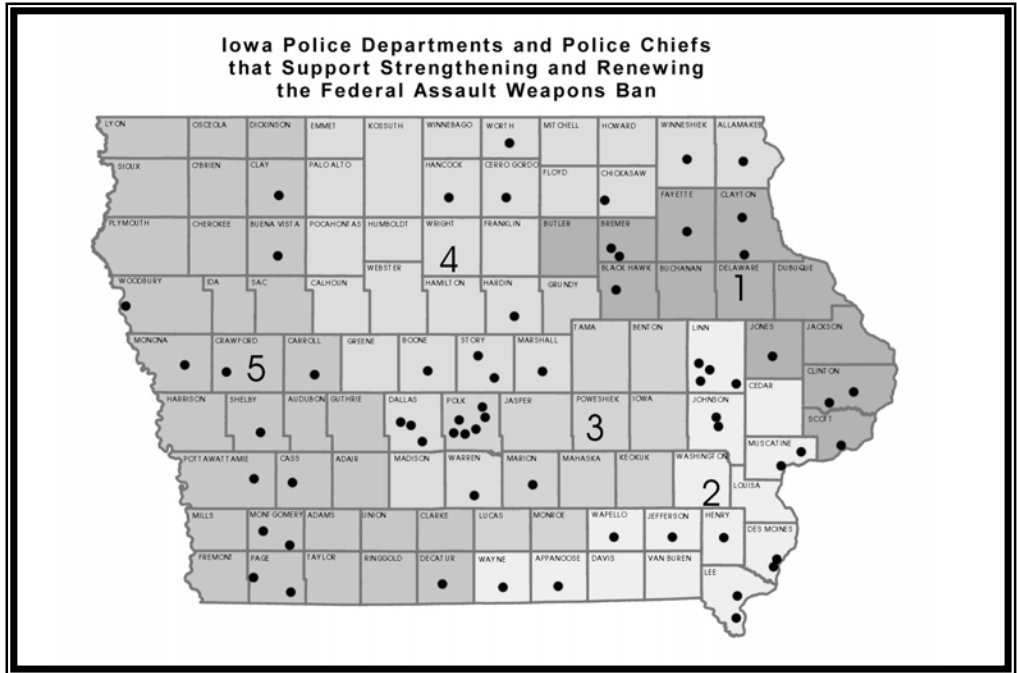
On March 2, legislation we have come to know as the "gun industry immunity bill" failed to pass the U.S. Senate by a vote of 90-8.

No, it was not the case that 90 Senators decided to go up against the NRA and stand up for the victims of gun violence.

Rather, after amendments to close the gun show loophole and renew the federal assault weapons ban were added to the bill, the NRA couldn't swallow the bill as amended, and urged its supporters to vote against it.

But this is no victory for the NRA. In fact, this could be described as a huge defeat for the NRA, considering the resources it poured into efforts to pass the bill, as well as money spent in recent elections to elect candidates who would vote the NRA way.

The bottom line: the NRA's top legislative priority has been defeated because a majority of Senators stood up and voted for measures they thought would reduce gun violence.



Six Months and Counting

Less than six months from now, on September 13, 2004, the current federal ban on military-style, semiautomatic assault weapons will expire, thereby allowing "pre-ban" assault weapons such as the AK-47 and the TEC-DC9 back out onto the civilian market... to join their counterparts – "post-ban" assault weapons specifically designed to evade the ban, such as the Bushmaster XM15 assault rifle used in the Washington DC area sniper shootings.

Although the U.S. Senate recently approved extending the current assault weapons ban for another ten years as an amendment to the gun industry immunity bill, the Senate voted down the entire package. Furthermore, IPGV notes that a straight renewal of current law will not decrease the availability of assault weapons to civilians.

The current assault weapons ban prohibits the manufacturer and sale of 19 assault weapons by name, and other weapons based on their physical characteristics. Unfortunately, gun manufacturers have found ways to evade the ban by making cosmetic changes to existing weapons, renaming them, and putting them back out on the market as post-ban products.

In order to ban both pre-ban and post-ban assault weapons, the federal assault weapons ban must be strengthened.

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Action Alerts, Updates and Upcoming Events...

Alert: The federal Assault Weapons Ban will expire less than six months from now, on September 13, 2004. Contact your Senators and Representatives and tell them to support/co-sponsor S 1431/HR 2038, the *Assault Weapons Ban and Law Enforcement Protection Act*, which would renew and strengthen the federal assault weapons ban. (See Contact Box Below)

Update: Two bills introduced in the Iowa General Assembly designed to expand the right to carry concealed weapons in Iowa have failed to pass the necessary committees/chambers before the funnel date and are effectively "dead" for the current legislative session. We thank the Senators and Representatives who have worked and/or voted against these bills.

Update: The gun industry immunity bill failed to pass the Senate! Thank you for your efforts to keep this despicable bill from becoming law! Thank Senator Harkin (202-224-3744) for supporting amendments to the bill that brought about its defeat.

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IPGV Director John Johnson argues: "Some people will claim that renewal of the assault weapons ban in its present form would be a 'political victory' because the NRA is opposed to even a straight renewal of current law. But a straight renewal would really be a victory for assault weapons manufacturers, like Bushmaster Firearms, because they will be able to continue to manufacture and market military-style, semiautomatic assault weapons to civilians. Americans need a real victory – an assault weapons ban that bans all assault weapons and protects the law enforcement community and the general public from these weapons of war."

Iowa PDs and Chiefs Support a Ban on Assault Weapons

More than 60 police departments and police chiefs from across Iowa have pledged their support for strengthening and renewing the federal assault weapons ban. (see graphic page 1)

The endorsements come from police chiefs and departments in all five congressional districts and from small towns to big cities. Only five police chiefs have indicated their opposition to a ban on assault weapons.

Nationally, 63% of Americans – including a majority of gun owners – favor strengthening the assault weapons ban, according to a recent survey commissioned by the Consumer Federation of America.

We at IPGV hope that Iowa's Senators and Congressmen are paying attention – Iowa's citizens and police chiefs want

an effective assault weapons ban. The current ban will expire in less than six months, and the clock is ticking.

The following support a strengthened assault weapons ban:

Police Departments: Altoona, Anamosa, Atlantic, Avoca, Boone, Burlington, Carroll, Cedar Falls, Cedar Rapids, Centerville, Clarinda, Clinton, Clive, Coralville, Corydon, Davenport, Decorah, Denison, Denver, DeWitt, Fairfield, Fort Madison, Garner, Harlan, Hianatha, Indianola, Iowa City, Iowa Falls, Johnston, Keokuk, Knoxville, Leon, Mapleton, Marion, Marshalltown, Mason City, Monona, Mount Vernon, Nashua, Nevada, Northwood, Oelwein, Ottumwa, Pleasant Hill, Red Oak, Shenandoah, Spencer, Storm Lake, Story City, Strawberry Point, Urbandale, Villisca, Waukee, Waukon, Waverly, West Burlington, West Des Moines, Wilton

Police Chiefs: Ankeny, Des Moines, Mount Pleasant, Muscatine, Sioux City

Concealed Carry Bills Proposed in Iowa General Assembly

This legislative session, two bills were introduced in the Iowa General Assembly that would have expanded the number of people allowed to carry concealed weapons, e.g. loaded handguns, in Iowa.

Neither bill was able to pass the required committees/chambers before the funnel date of March 26, and both pieces of legislation are effectively dead for this legislative session. IPGV opposed both bills.

The first bill, HF 2512, would allow non-Iowa residents with concealed carry permits from other states to carry concealed weapons in Iowa without obtaining an Iowa permit.

IPGV opposed HF 2512 because the bill would not benefit Iowans and would not make Iowa a safer state. In fact, it could have the opposite effect.

Texas' concealed carry law is unique in the nation in that it requires law enforcement to report the arrest of any conceal carry permit holder. Between January 1, 1996 and August 31, 2001, Texas conceal carry permit holders were arrested for a total of 5,314 crimes, including murder, kidnapping, rape/sexual assault, weapon-related offenses, drug offenses, and theft.

The arrest rate of Texas conceal carry permit holders for weapon-related offenses was 81 percent higher than that of the general population of Texas, age 21 and older.

Requirements for issuing permits to carry concealed weapons in many states are not as stringent as they are in Iowa. Applicants for an Iowa permit are required to complete a state approved four-hour safety training course, undergo a criminal

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US Legislator Contact Box

- **Senator Charles Grassley**
202-224-3744; <http://grassley.senate.gov/webform.htm>
- **Senator Tom Harkin**
202-224-3254; tom_harkin@harkin.senate.gov
- **Representative Jim Leach (1st District)**
202-225-6576; talk2jim@mail.house.gov
- **Representative Jim Nussle (2nd District)**
202-225-2911; nussleia@mail.house.gov
- **Representative Leonard Boswell (3rd District)**
202-225-3806; rep.boswell.ia03@mail.house.gov
- **Representative Tom Latham (4th District)**
202-225-5476; tom.latham@mail.house.gov
- **Representative Steve King (5th District)**
202-225-4426; www.house.gov/steveking/zipauth.htm

Office of Senator ___/US Senate/ Washington, D.C. 20510
Office of Rep. ___/ US House of Reps/ Washington, D.C. 20515

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background check, not be addicted to the use of alcohol or any controlled substance, and not have a history of mental illness or repeated acts of violence.

In addition, applicants are required to provide “reasonable justification” of the need to go armed, defined as “clear and convincing evidence that the applicant needs to go armed.”

The proposed legislation would authorize the carrying of weapons in Iowa by those who have not met Iowa’s own standards. That makes no sense.

IPGV wonders why the Iowa legislature would even consider legislation that would give special consideration to a very small percentage of nonresidents, but would provide no benefit to Iowans.

It would make more sense for lawmakers to consider the wishes of the vast majority of Iowans and Americans who don’t carry concealed weapons in public places, don’t want to carry concealed weapons, and don’t want to sit next to a person in a movie theater who is carrying a loaded handgun.

The second bill, HF 2341, would allow off-duty, out of state, and retired peace officers to carry weapons in Iowa.

IPGV notes that off duty law enforcement officers already have the right to carry a weapon in Iowa, unless specifically prohibited by their own department. However, this piece of the legislation would trump local police department policy.

Secondly, IPGV notes that out-of-state peace officers already have the right to carry a concealed weapon when in Iowa on official business, such as when they are escorting a prisoner or in pursuit of a suspect.

IPGV does not consider that out of state law enforcement officers in Iowa on vacation or passing through should have a blanket right to carry concealed weapons.

IPGV opposed the third part of HF 2341, which would give retired law enforcement officers the right to carry concealed weapons. IPGV believes that all Iowans, regardless of previous law enforcement experience, should be subject to the same requirements and scrutiny when seeking a permit to carry a concealed weapon.

Under federal law, those convicted of felony and misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence, and those under a court restraining order for domestic violence, are prohibited from possessing firearms. Unfortunately, in many states, the provisions prohibiting possession by misdemeanor offenders and those under restraining orders are not adequately enforced.

IPGV supports legislation that would make it a crime under Iowa state law to

possess a weapon under these circumstances. This would give state and local law enforcement clear jurisdiction to remove guns from the hands of domestic abusers, which would decrease the risk of lethal violence.

The state of Washington passed a similar law in 1993, but until recently there was no system to enforce it and no money to pay for it.

But for the past year, officials in King County, WA have taken matters into their own hands. The King County Sheriff’s office has teamed up with local district court judges to implement a system that will effectively get the guns out of the hands of domestic abusers, as federal and state law intend.

Sheriff’s deputies are provided with a form to take them through the process of determining the presence of firearms, the makes and models of the guns, and importantly, whether or not there is an existing restraining order. Federal law allows removal of guns if a restraining order has been issued.

King County’s program should serve as a model to communities across the country. Guns can and should be removed from domestic violence abusers. Iowa lawmakers, judges and law enforcement officers should take steps to reduce the unnecessary lethality of guns in the hands of domestic abusers. To ignore this is to put thousands of abused Iowans at a higher risk of gun violence.

Join our email list!

IPGV maintains a weekly email list called *First Monday and Every Monday*. Every Monday, we distribute an Action Alert, Editorial, News Item or Update to keep IPGV members and friends actively involved in the gun violence prevention movement. Just email ipgv@qwest.net to have your name added to our list. We won't give email addresses to other organizations, and you can remove yourself from the list at any time. It's a great way to stay connected to the movement and find out what you can do to help.

Disarming Domestic Abusers: A Lesson from King County, WA

Guns and domestic violence make a deadly combination. The Iowa Attorney General’s Office reports that over a period of nine years from 1995 to 2003, 108 Iowans were killed in domestic abuse murders. Sixty-six (61%) of these Iowa victims were shot to death.

Studies have shown that family and intimate assaults involving a firearm are 12 times more likely to result in death than non-firearm associated assaults between family and intimates, and if there is a gun in her home, a woman is 5.4 to 7.2 times more likely to be the victim of an intimate partner homicide.

The U.S. Congress recognized the potential danger of firearms in the hands of domestic abusers and took action in 1994 and 1996, passing legislation to address the problem. The Iowa Legislature should act to ensure that federal law is enforced in Iowa.

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Mission: To reduce the number of deaths and injuries from firearms in Iowa, and to make Iowa a role model for other states in the area of gun violence prevention. We view gun violence as a public health issue. We are concerned with all forms of gun violence—homicides, suicides, and unintentional shootings.

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