



NEWSLETTER

Iowans for the Prevention of Gun Violence

November 2004

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U.S. House Repeals D.C. Gun Laws

NRA and gun rights activists were handed another victory last month when the U.S. House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to repeal a ban on handguns and other strict gun laws in the District of Columbia. The vote, on September 29, came on the heels of the expiration of the federal assault weapons ban just two weeks earlier.

If passed into law, this measure would repeal the District's ban on handguns and semi-automatic weapons, end the District's firearms registration requirement, eliminate safe storage requirements, and remove restrictions on the carrying and possession of concealed weapons.

In addition, this federal legislation explicitly prohibits the local D.C. government from enacting future gun control laws that "discourage or eliminate the private ownership or use of firearms."

Local officials have voiced strong objection to this legislation which many feel violates the city's right to home-rule. D.C. Mayor, Anthony A. Williams, told House leaders that he takes "sharp exception to this wholly inappropriate intrusion into what is clearly a local matter."

Congressional Delegate Eleanor Norton Holmes, all 13 City Council members, the police chief, and the school superintendent have also been outspoken in their opposition to the bill.

Opponents of the bill cite the gun-free environment in the U.S. Capitol Building as evidence that legislators recognize the danger of an armed society. Many are outraged because they feel their Representatives have secured a safe environment for themselves while surrendering the citizens in the city around them to a "free-fire zone."



D.C. citizen and activist Hannah Hawkins rhetorically asked the Associated Press, "If the Capitol can be handgun free, why can't we?"

The bill's supporters, strongly backed by the NRA, claim that D.C.'s handgun ban and other strict gun laws are in violation of the 2nd Amendment. Repealing these laws, they say, would restore the right of D.C. citizens to bare arms. However, in January 2004, a federal court ruled against the NRA's claims that the handgun ban was unconstitutional.

Iowa Representatives Leonard Boswell (D), Steve King (R), Tom Latham (R), and Jim Nussle (R), all co-sponsored the legislation. Representative Jim Leach (R) voted in opposition to the bill.

Similar legislation has been introduced in the Senate and is co-sponsored by Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley. Senator Tom Harkin opposes the bill.

IPGV Proposes Voluntary Out-of-Home Storage for Gun Owners

Hunting is to many Iowans what baseball is to Americans. It's a pastime, a hobby, even a family activity. Approximately half of all Iowa homes contain firearms, and an estimated three fourths of those guns are hunting rifles or shotguns. But unlike almost any other pastime, the love of this game, puts many of Iowa's families at risk.

Numerous studies have shown that families with a gun in the home are at a greater risk of gun violence. Homicides in the home are three times more likely when there is a gun in the household, and the risk of suicide by a family member is increased by nearly five times in homes with guns.

Those who enjoy hunting for sport often must make the decision to either risk keeping a gun in the home, or give up hunting altogether. In response to this dilemma, IPGV has developed a strategy that would allow Iowans to continue to pursue this sport while reducing the risk to their families.

A typical hunter may only use a gun for a couple of weeks to a couple of months a year. The remainder of the year the guns remain in storage in the home and place the families living with them at increased risk. IPGV is developing an off-site, away from home, storage alternative that would give hunters and other gun owners the option to store their guns safely away from their homes.

Possibilities for alternative storage facilities may include specially designated safes at gun dealerships, shooting ranges, or law enforcement agencies. We propose that these organizations could provide gun storage as an optional service, similar to the way in which banks provide safe-deposit boxes to their customers. Gun owners would be able to easily remove their gun(s) from storage when it would be in use, and deposit it back at the storage facility during the off-season or at low-use times so it could be safely away from children and out of the house.

This storage would be entirely voluntary, not a result of laws requiring it, although legislation could offer incentives or lower barriers. In the coming months, IPGV will be contacting the above mentioned organizations requesting that they consider participating in this program as both a service to the community and a business venture.

Inside this Issue:

1994 Assault Weapons Ban Expires

**Rural Suicides Out-Number
Urban Homicides**



Tell your Senators to vote NO to the D.C. Personal Protection Act! Legislation has been introduced in the Senate that would repeal the handgun ban and other local firearm laws in the District of Columbia. Similar legislation has already passed in the House.

Close the Gun Show Loophole Call your U.S. and Iowa Representatives and tell them to require background checks on ALL gun sales at gun shows. Currently unlicensed dealers are allowed to sell firearms at gun shows with no questions asked and no background check. This increases the number of guns in the hands of prohibited purchasers.

ACT NOW!

Call or write your elected officials

US Legislator Contact Box

Senator Charles Grassley

202-224-3744; <http://grassley.senate.gov/webform.htm>

Senator Tom Harkin

202-224-3254; <http://harkin.senate.gov/contact/contact.cfm>

Representative Jim Leach (1st District)

202-225-6576; <http://www.house.gov/leach/email.htm>

Representative Jim Nussle (2nd District)

202-225-2911; <http://nussle.house.gov/email.htm>

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/writerep

Address:

Office of Senator ___/US Senate/ Washington, D.C. 20510

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

From the Desk of the Executive Director : Shame on Congress for Allowing Assault Weapons Ban to Expire



Over the past few months IPGV has been dedicated to the strengthening and renewal of the federal assault weapons ban. We are disappointed with President Bush and the Republican leadership in Congress for allowing the 1994 ban to expire September 13, 2004.

The assault weapons ban prohibited the manufacture, transfer, and possession of 19 specific military-style, semiautomatic assault weapons by name. It also banned several characteristics of these weapons including large capacity ammunition magazines that held more than 10 rounds. Firearms and magazines in circulation prior to the ban were "grandfathered" in and remained legal.

While assault weapons represent an unreasonable risk of death and injury to all Americans, the risk is greatest for the nation's law enforcement officers who face the potential threat from assault weapons on a daily basis. Although assault weapons make up no more than 1-2 percent of all guns in the general population, they are used in a disproportionate number of cop killings. Based on an analysis of FBI data by the Violence Policy Center, one out of every five law enforcement officers killed in the line of duty was killed with an assault weapon.

It is because of this hazard, that

1,963 police chiefs and sheriffs across the country, including 107 from Iowa, recently signed a statement calling on Congress to strengthen and renew the assault weapons ban. Unfortunately, lawmaker's loyalty to the NRA and the gun lobby is greater than their concern for the safety of the nation's law enforcement and the citizens of the

United States. All Americans, especially law enforcement families, should be outraged.

Public opinion surveys taken in the last year show that about 70 percent of Americans support a ban on military-style, semiautomatic assault weapons.

The surveys show that the ban is supported by virtually all demographic groups - men and women, gun owners and non-gun

owners, and Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. It appears that the only demographic group that is opposed to an assault weapons ban is the United States Congress.

IPGV's position is that semiautomatic assault weapons, which are specifically designed for military purposes to inflict mass casualties on the enemy, should not be available to the general public. While we recognize that some gun owners may enjoy shooting assault weapons, the potential hazard that these weapons pose to law enforcement officers and the general public far outweighs their benefit to the small number of people who use assault weapons for lawful recreational purposes.

"Unfortunately lawmaker's loyalty to the NRA and the gun lobby is greater than their concern for the safety of the nation's law enforcement and the citizens of the United States"

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.

Unfolding the Urban Myth:



Number of Rural Suicides Overtake Urban Homicides in America

Americans in rural areas are now just as likely to die of gunshot wounds as those in major cities. The difference is whose finger is on the trigger. Small-town residents are committing suicide at the same rate that urban residents are being murdered, according to a study released by the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. The study found that suicide deaths now account for more than half of all firearm deaths in the United States.

Researchers analyzed differences in urban and rural intentional firearm deaths - homicides and suicides - by examining over 580,000 death certificates from 1989-1999 in every county in the United States. Over the 11 year period, nearly 370,000 people died from intentional firearm injuries. Over 54 percent of these deaths were categorized as firearm suicides and 45 percent as firearm homicides.

After adjusting for differences in income, education, employment rates and other factors, researchers found that rural counties had over 1.5 times the firearm suicide rate that urban counties had. Correspondingly, urban counties had twice the firearm homicide rate of rural counties.

A demographic analysis of Iowa reinforces the conclusions of the nationwide study. The difference between rural Iowa counties (less than 10,000 pop.) of which there are 18, and urban counties, of which there are 9, in terms of gun suicides is quite dramatic. The rate per hundred thousand in the 18 counties with the smallest populations is 8.17, while the rate in the 9 counties with the largest populations is 4.52. The rate in the small counties is 180% that of the large counties.

Over the period of study, gun homicides nationwide decreased at a rate of about 5 percent per year and suicides increased by 1-2 percent each year. The researchers cited the one-sided nature of legislation aimed at firearm deaths as contributing towards this disparity. Over the same period of time, five to six times as many bills were introduced in Congress that dealt with firearm homicide as opposed to firearm suicide.

This trend applied only to firearm related intentional injuries. Other non-gun forms of homicide and suicide were found to be similar in both urban and rural areas. "A major take home from these findings is that although prevention efforts must be continued in big cities, dispelling the urban myth that gun death does not touch areas outside of big cities should be a high priority," said lead author of the study Charles C. Branas, PhD.

IPGV Welcomes New Staff Member

IPGV is excited to welcome Leah Woodward as our new communications director.

Leah graduated from Hamline University in Saint Paul, MN with a degree in English and a focus on Communications Studies and Gender studies.



Leah Woodward,
communications
director

She began at IPGV this July, following the resignation of Kirsten Meredith Beyer, who left to pursue a PhD in Geography at the University of Iowa.

This winter at IPGV, Leah will be focusing on promoting IPGV's legislative agenda as well as on conducting a study of Iowa's enforcement of the Federal Domestic Violence Offender ban.

You can contact Leah at leah-woodward@qwest.net.

Support IPGV!

Our 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.

I support Iowans for the Prevention of Gun Violence with my tax-deductible contribution of:

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IPGV 2005 OBJECTIVES

Extend Brady Background Checks to All Firearms Sales

Currently forty percent of all gun sales in the U.S. occur on the secondary market and are not subject to Brady background checks. These secondary markets include: gun shows, flea markets, estate sales, auctions, internet sales, and classified newspaper ads. These markets enable prohibited users and criminals to purchase guns illegally. IPGV supports legislation that would require background checks all secondary firearms transfers.

Enact a State Assault Weapons Ban

Because of inaction by the federal government, the 1994 federal Assault Weapons Ban was allowed to expire on September 13, 2004. Military Style semiautomatic assault weapons represent a risk to all citizens, but the risk is greatest to law enforcement officers who risk facing these weapons each time they answer a call. Public opinion surveys show that 70 percent of all Americans support a ban on Assault weapons. Iowans do not have to fall victim to federal disregard of this issue. IPGV proposes a strengthened state assault weapon ban to be passed in the state legislature.

Remove Firearms from Homes of Domestic Abusers

The Iowa Coalition against Domestic Abuse estimates that 22,000-40,000 Iowa women suffer from domestic abuse each year. Between 1995 and 2003, 68 Iowa women and 12 Iowa men were murdered by an intimate partner. Federal law prohibits the purchase and possession of firearms by domestic abusers and those under restraining orders for domestic assault. Anecdotal evidence suggests that because domestic violence cases typically are prosecuted in state courts, this federal law is not fully enforced. A state law prohibiting domestic abusers from possessing firearms would increase enforcement by giving the authority to enforce the law to those who most often deal with domestic disputes; Iowa district courts, county prosecutors, and state and local law enforcement.

Create an Office of Suicide Prevention

Suicide is a growing concern for Iowans. In 2003, the number of suicide deaths by gun in Iowa jumped up 12 percent from 2002, and 14 percent above the 5 year average of 154. IPGV supports the establishment of a state Office of Suicide Prevention in the Department of Public Health. This office would coordinate suicide prevention programs throughout the state, track statewide suicide statistics, and keep abreast of national developments and efforts in suicide prevention.