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Reno, Rubin to Press Local Police On Gun Buyer Background Checks

Reuter

Thursday, July 17, 1997; Page A10

The Washington Post

Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin and Attorney General Janet Reno said yesterday they will work with local police to make sure background checks continue on prospective handgun buyers.

The two Cabinet members met a delegation of police groups to explore options after a divided Supreme Court last month struck down a key part of the Brady gun control law that requires local sheriffs to conduct the checks during a five-day period.

Rubin said it was "critical to the public safety" that the background checks continue on applicants to purchase guns.

He said the high court's decision meant law enforcement officers still had to deal with the issue but would have to change their approach.

Rubin said federal officials wanted suggestions from the law enforcement officers and wanted to work closely with them to find a plan to deal with the issue.

Despite the ruling, local police officers may continue to perform the checks voluntarily. In addition, a national system to instantly check the buyer's background must be in place by November 1998.

Reno said she agreed with Rubin on the past effectiveness of the Brady law. "It seems to me this was a good law enforcement tool."

She said it would be important to develop "comprehensive, accurate, complete criminal history records," especially when the national system takes effect.

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