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Fact Check II [Brady Bill]

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BRADY BILL

FACT: "Prior to 1993, although federal law made it a felony for any convicted felon or fugitive to buy or possess a handgun, our police had no practical mechanism to enforce this law..."

CONFLICT: It was a felony for convicted felons to possess a handgun but there were exceptions.

1) "Under current law, convicted felons can petition the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms to regain their right to own and carry guns after they are released from prison."

SOURCE: States News Service, Washington DC, 7/ 30/ 92

~~FREE STORIES AND YOUR OUT~~

DATE: AUGUST 1, 1996

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BRADY BILL

YOUR SEARCH REQUEST IS:

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LEVEL 1... 38

PROB. 12-1973
x ~~felony~~ federal law made it a felony for any
convicted felon or fugitive to buy or possess
a handgun

Page 5

8TH STORY of Focus printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1992 States News Service
States News Service

August 20, 1992, Thursday

LENGTH: 1401 words

HEADLINE: Gun-Toting Felons More Common In Colorado Than You Think

BYLINE: By Kelly Richmond, States News Service

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

This year, at least 787 burglars, arsonists, murderers, rapists and other Colorado felons will regain a right they haven't enjoyed since leaving prison a decade ago. They will be able to walk into a pawnshop or sporting goods store and legally purchase the handgun, rifle or shotgun of their choice.

Federal laws passed in the 1960s had prohibited convicted felons from owning guns unless pardoned by the president or a governor. But amendments approved in 1986 under heavy lobbying by the National Rifle Association allow for some exceptions.

Under one provision, if a state restores basic civil rights -- such as allowing ex-cons to vote and serve on a jury -- then federal gun rights are restored at the same time.

A more restrictive Colorado state statute prevents those convicted of arson, burglary or a violent felony from owning a gun for 10 years after their release from prison. But after a decade, violent felons regain their gun rights automatically.

And those convicted of felonies that don't fall under the 10-year rule -- drug trafficking, for example -- can buy a gun as soon as they hit the streets.

"Theoretically, a drug kingpin could get out of prison and walk across the street and buy a handgun at a pawnshop," said Eileen Husselbaugh, an attorney in Dallas with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Unlike many states and the federal government, Colorado doesn't conduct background checks of felons who want guns. Whether they have to wait 10 years or are eligible for a gun immediately, the right is restored without question.

According to the Colorado District Attorneys Council, 778 felons violent felons were convicted in 1982 in areas outside of metropolitan Denver. All will regain their gun rights this year. No statistics were kept at the time for Denver, but the state's largest city likely adds hundreds to that total.

Some members of the U.S. Congress want to step in and close the law's loopholes.

"Common sense tells us that the hands of a convicted felon are no place for a gun," said Rep. Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., who is chairman of the House subcommittee that deals with criminal justice issues.

Schumer has proposed legislation, already approved by his subcommittee, that would impose tough new restrictions on felons who want guns. It would permanently ban firearms possession by felons convicted of violent or drug-related crimes.

Schumer's bill also would force states, like Colorado, that have been restoring gun rights automatically to conduct background checks first to make sure an ex-con who wants a gun is not a threat to the public.

Finally, his bill would put an end to another exception to the 1986 law, which allows felons to apply to the federal government for permission to own a gun in states that don't automatically restore the right. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has spent \$22 million on background checks since 1985, restoring gun rights to 2,307 of the 7,261 felons who applied. From 1985 to 1989, 47 were rearrested for crimes such as rape and assault.

"The easy access of criminals to dangerous weapons is a major source of violent crime in this country," Schumer said. "The federal government should be doing everything in its power to shut off that access -- not to open another route."

The agency itself would be happy to see the program end. Spokesman Les Stanford said that if federal investigators weren't conducting background checks on gun applicants, "they'd certainly have more time for other things," such as "trying to stop gun runners, arsonists and people who make bombs."

A National Rifle Association spokesman says the group has not had a chance to evaluate the bill, which was introduced a month ago, and does not have an opinion on it. The NRA has testified to Congress in support of denying firearms rights to violent felons and drug traffickers, but also supports the right of ex-cons to apply for exceptions.

A subcommittee aide said he has high hopes that the bill will be able to get through the House and Senate before the end of the 1992 session. "This one is hard, politically, to vote against," he said.

Even if Congress fails to act, there may be another option in Colorado: A little-known provision of the state's law that requires convicts to obtain a good-conduct certificate before their civil rights, and therefore their gun rights, can be restored.

Under this provision -- long ignored by state officials -- convicts who want their rights back must seek "a behavior certificate of citizenship" from the warden when they leave prison. The certificate, which would only go to prisoners who had not caused trouble while behind bars, would then be presented to the governor for his or her approval.

The bureau's Husselbaugh suggests this provision could be used to limit the spread of guns to felons not covered by the 10-year rule, if the state was so inclined. She has asked the state attorney general's office to issue an opinion

on the matter.

"Any time we can keep a gun out of the hands of a convicted felon is a plus to us," Husselbaugh said.

But that law is "archaic," and the few felons who have tried to use the certificates have been refused, said attorney Mark Noel, extradition and clemency coordinator for Gov. Roy Romer. The certificates "are not ever honored, and they never have been," he said.

Assistant Attorney General John Lizza said no action has been taken on the federal agency's request. Normally, opinions are only issued at the request of other state agencies, he said.

Of particular concern to some observers is the fact that convicted drug offenders retain their gun rights under current Colorado law.

Sgt. Dennis Cribari of the Denver Police Department's Career Criminal Unit says many drug dealers on the streets today are convicted felons. Police will catch a dealer, the courts will convict him or her, "and within a year or two you'll catch them again," he said.

"Nine times out of 10, if we do a search warrant for dope, we'll find a weapon in the house, usually in close proximity to the offender," Cribari said. "About 50 percent of the time when we stop a car when we suspect the occupants of drug dealing we'll find a gun in the car."

Laws governing felons' access to guns vary widely from state to state. Here is the situation in several western states:

COLORADO

Felons convicted of arson, burglary and violent crimes may not own or use a gun for 10 years after they leave prison. Violations are punishable by one to four years in prison for a first offense and two to eight years for subsequent offenses.

Felons convicted of other crimes regain their firearms rights when they leave prison. There are no background checks.

ARIZONA

Arizona automatically restores gun ownership rights to felons convicted of a nonviolent crime.

For more than one conviction or for violent crimes, the ex-con must go through investigations, interviews, petition the Arizona Superior Court and prove that he or she is not a danger to society.

NEVADA

Nevada statute prohibits convicted felons from possessing firearms, unless the individual has received a pardon and specific restoration of firearms rights.

Nevada's Board of Pardons Commissioners decides on a case-by-case basis whether convicted felons will get their civil or firearms rights back. In June, the most recent records available, nine out of 11 convicted felons who applied to the Board of Pardons Commissioners for firearm rights restoration got back the privilege.

NEW MEXICO

A 1981 New Mexico law automatically restores firearm rights 10 years after a felon is convicted. But Democratic Gov. Bruce King and his predecessors have skirted that law, imposing stricter regulations.

Since taking office in 1991, King has restored firearms rights to only seven felons and only after an extensive application process and background investigation.

King's administration asked the state attorney general's office in February for a legal interpretation of the 1981 statute. King's present operating policy draws its clout from the state constitution, which grants the chief executive pardoning authority over felons.

WYOMING

Those convicted of violent felonies lose their firearms rights permanently and can only get them back with a full pardon. Ex-cons convicted of non-violent felonies are not restricted.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 21, 1992

9TH STORY of Focus printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1992 States News Service
States News Service

July 30, 1992, Thursday

LENGTH: 513 words

HEADLINE: Loophole That Allows Ex-Cons To Get Guns Must Be Eliminated, Lawmakers Say

BYLINE: By Holly Yeager, States News Service

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Between 1985 and 1989, the federal government returned to 1,781 convicted felons the right to own firearms -- a right they lost when they were found guilty.

On Thursday, Rep. Edward Feighan, D-19, and two other gun control advocates released the names of 47 of those who were arrested again -- proof, they say, that the loophole allowing the felons to regain their gun rights must be eliminated.

Under current law, convicted felons can petition the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) to regain their right to own and carry guns after they are released from prison. The list, resulting from a 1990 BATF study, includes the names of felons who were arrested after the BATF restored their right to own guns.

Among those on the list are Michael Tuttle of Tacoma, Wash., charged with child molesting eight years after he was convicted of delivering drugs, and Michael Paul Donhert, charged with sexual assault nine years after he was convicted of burglary. None of those named are residents of Ohio.

The list "shows how awfully stupid it is to allow felons to get back guns," said Rep. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y.

"It is absolutely unconscionable that the federal government assists convicted felons in restoring their right to own guns," Feighan said. It's even more disturbing that nearly \$4 million is spent each year to investigate the applications, the Lakewood Democrat added.

Feighan is the chief sponsor of the Brady bill, which would impose a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases and require background checks of gun buyers.

He, Schumer and Rep. Larry Smith, D-Fla., succeeded in eliminating funding for the BATF program from the Treasury Department's spending bill earlier this summer. The Senate Appropriations Committee approved a similar proposal Thursday, and the Senate is expected to pass the bill within the next two weeks.

"The American public supports the limiting of felons from owning guns at any time again in their lives," Feighan said.

In Ohio, more than 40 convicted felons have applied to regain their right to own firearms since 1982, according to records published in the Federal Register.

According to Julie Graham, a spokeswoman in the Ohio Attorney General's office, the purchase of a firearm is prohibited in Ohio for those people who are under indictment or have been convicted of a violent felony.

Jim Sweeney, Feighan's Washington spokesman, said, "The fact that it does not apply to all felons leads us to believe that there are still some categories of felons that could exploit the BATF loophole."

Jack Killorin, a BATF spokesman, said that about 1,000 convicted felons apply each year to the federal agency to have their right to own a gun restored, of which about 300 are approved.

"We don't like to do these (investigations), but in course of doing these, we have found some cases it's perfectly reasonable to do it for," Killorin said.

But, he added, "If we had a choice of spending our time looking at (these) people or locking them up, we'd spend it all on locking up bad guys."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 1, 1992

78TH STORY of Focus printed in FULL format.

Copyright 1989 The Times Mirror Company
Los Angeles Times

May 7, 1989, Sunday, Home Edition

SECTION: Part 1; Page 1; Column 1; Metro Desk

LENGTH: 2194 words

HEADLINE: FOUR-YEAR SAGA OF WILLIE ED HARRIS;
GUN DEALINGS LEAVE TRAIL OF FRUSTRATION FOR LAWYERS

SERIES: First of two parts. Next: Cash-and-carry handgun markets.

BYLINE: By JOHN HURST, Times Staff Writer

BODY:

Gun shows seem harmless enough, on the surface.

There is even a festive, make-believe quality to these weekend events held at county and state fairgrounds and at civic convention centers all over the state.

Sometimes men dress in soldier of fortune camouflage outfits and walk around carrying assault rifles. A man wearing a buckskin shirt with a six-shooter strapped to his hip is just part of the crowd.

Many of the men who buy, sell and trade guns at the shows seem to truly adore and appreciate these weapons. One federal firearms agent likens gun shows to the gatherings of model train collectors. The guns are so plentiful and are handled so casually that they don't seem to be quite real.

But they are real. And while most participants in these events are probably just plain law-abiding, gun-loving folks, law enforcement officials say that some of the transactions conducted at the shows are not only illegal but can be dangerous to society.

Gun shows, say law enforcement officials, can be a marketplace for stolen weapons and a source of firearms for criminals because weapons transactions at these events frequently go unrecorded and handguns often are sold in violation of state law requiring a 15-day "cooling-off" period and a criminal records check of the purchaser.

The shows are sometimes linked, say investigators, to street gangs and narcotics dealers and to international gun smuggling.

Take the case of Willie Ed Harris.

When police arrested Harris at a gun show in Pomona on May 5, 1985, it looked like just another misdemeanor handgun sale.

After all, Harris was only one of 32 people charged with breaking California law by selling handguns cash-and-carry to undercover police officers at the

weekend show. The miscreants could expect to be fined a few hundred dollars and sent on their way.

But Harris' arrest proved to be not just another misdemeanor case. It was instead the first step in a twisting, frustrating four-year journey that led investigators from gun shows to violent street gangs in Los Angeles, to a drug dealer, to a Filipino gun-smuggling operation and to a Los Angeles County sheriff's reserve deputy who allegedly ran an illicit firearms business, according to court records and interviews.

Pomona police realized that Harris was not simply guilty of a misdemeanor when a criminal records check revealed two previous felony convictions: assault with a deadly weapon involving a pistol in 1978 and lewd acts with a child under the age of 14 in 1971.

It is against the law in California for a convicted felon to possess a concealable weapon. It is also against state law for a person convicted of a felony involving a gun to possess any type of firearm. In other words, Harris was prohibited from possessing handguns, rifles or shotguns.

On May 15, 1985, 10 days after his arrest at the gun show, Pomona police officers served a search warrant on Harris' home on Redondo Boulevard in a working-class neighborhood west of downtown Los Angeles. They found two handguns, a blackjack, a billy club and at least a dozen empty firearms boxes, according to court records.

No-Contest Plea

On June 13, Harris pleaded no contest in Los Angeles County Superior Court in Pomona to three felony counts of being a convicted felon in possession of handguns and two felony counts of possessing illegal weapons: the blackjack and billy club. Superior Court Judge Loren Miller Jr. put Harris on two years probation without supervision, over the objections of Deputy Dist. Atty. Harold W. Hoffman Jr. A condition of Harris' probation was that he not possess any firearms.

Miller, in an interview, defended giving Harris probation rather than jail time, stating:

"I remember how chicken I thought it was to arrest somebody at the gun show. I thought that (selling guns) was the purpose of the gun show. . . . People are roaming around the street killing each other and they (police) are all camped out at the gun show arresting people."

On July 25, 1985, just over a month after he was put on probation, Pomona police officers went back to Harris' home, accompanied by Los Angeles police officers, and found two loaded AR-15 assault weapons and 12 boxes of ammunition, according to court documents. Harris was again charged with illegally possessing firearms and with child endangerment, because his children allegedly had easy access to the guns.

Harris posted bail and remained free as the case worked its way through the Superior Court system.

Federal Involvement

In the meantime, Los Angeles police and federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents began taking a closer look at Harris.

In 1985, gangs in Los Angeles were beginning to use assault weapons in street killings. In mid-April, 1986, police got a tip that "an individual by the name of Bill was selling fully automatic weapons to (Rolling 30s Crips) street gang members, as well as handguns," according to a search warrant affidavit on file in Los Angeles Municipal Court.

The affidavit, signed by Los Angeles Police Detective Jaime Samaniego, stated further that, "Your affiant learned through departmental channels that 'Bill' is Willie Ed Harris."

On April 29, 1986, detectives from the LAPD Gang Activities Section arrested Harris for allegedly selling an informant a Mac-10 assault pistol equipped with an illegal silencer, according to court documents.

At the same time, police found an AR-15 assault rifle under Harris' house and seized two boxes of bullets with explosive tips and nearly 1,000 rounds of other ammunition from inside the home, according to court documents.

Harris told police that he had bought the Mac-10 assault pistol at a gun show.

"Defendant stated that (he) had sold numerous weapons at gun shows," says a police report on file in Superior Court. "Defendant stated that he made extra money by buying and selling weapons. He sold weapons to anyone, including (narcotics) dealers."

Denies Gang Link

Harris told The Times that he did buy the Mac-10 and the silencer at a gun show and that he sold them to an acquaintance nicknamed "Way Out" who turned out to be working with the police. But he denied allegations that he sold weapons to gang members or drug dealers.

The LAPD subsequently turned over its case against Harris to agents of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Ken Cates, who is now working for U.S. Customs, was a federal firearms agent on the Harris case more than two years ago.

"My partner and I were working gangs," Cates recalled. "We identified him (Harris) as an individual who in our estimation bought . . . quantities of guns and then . . . sold them to black youth gang members."

Serial numbers on handgun boxes that had been seized from Harris were traced by firearms agents to a federally licensed gun dealer in Highland Park.

Strange Combination

James Glen Boyd and Willie Ed Harris would seem to be an odd couple to form a

partnership of any kind.

Harris, 46, is black, over 6 feet tall and overweight. One of his eyes stares off into the distance as he talks. Harris says he suffers from high blood pressure, gout and diabetes. And there are the multiple felony convictions.

Boyd, 52 at the time of the investigation, was described as white, tall and handsome with gray hair. A firearms agent said he looked like actor Peter Graves of "Mission Impossible." And whereas Harris was a convicted felon, Boyd had been a Los Angeles County sheriff's reserve deputy since 1968 -- a position with all the authority of a regular peace officer. He resigned in 1986 -- in April, the same month that Harris was arrested with the Mac-10 and silencer.

Boyd did not operate a regular gun shop. Instead, he sold weapons out of his home in Highland Park and at weekend gun shows.

Harris says he met Boyd at a gun show and began to peddle weapons for him on consignment.

"Any weapon that Willie Harris could acquire," Cates said, "he would sell it to anybody who wanted to buy it."

Falsified Forms

During their investigation, firearms agents discovered 64 federal weapons purchase forms that Harris and Boyd allegedly falsified apparently to conceal the fact that Boyd was delivering weapons to a felon.

In the meantime, federal agents also discovered that during 1985 and 1986, Boyd was falsifying firearms forms to sell large numbers of handguns to Nestor Atacador, a citizen of the Philippines, who was smuggling the weapons out of the country in microwave ovens for resale on the black market in the Philippines and other countries, according to court documents and interviews.

Six of the handguns turned up in Japan on June 6, 1986, according to court documents.

An informant told federal agents that Atacador met Boyd in a bar, but Cates says he believes the two became acquainted at a gun show while Atacador was looking for weapons.

On Oct. 31, 1986, a federal grand jury indicted Atacador for allegedly attempting to smuggle 41 pistols out of the country and on nine counts of allegedly falsifying federal firearm documents.

With Atacador under indictment, federal agents continued to put together their case against Boyd.

But in December, 1986, Atacador jumped his \$50,000 bond and disappeared. He remains at large.

Still trying to build their case against Boyd, federal prosecutors struck a deal with Harris in January, 1987, to gain his cooperation. In exchange for his promise to testify against Boyd, prosecutors agreed to reduce pending charges

against Harris.

Death Ends Inquiry

But none of this would prove to be enough to put Boyd in prison.

As federal agents in Los Angeles worked on their case against him, the gun dealer moved to rural Virginia and bought an old colonial style home.

Then, some time after the deal with Harris was made, firearms agents in Virginia called Los Angeles. Boyd was dead. Natural causes. Case closed.

On July 9, 1987, Harris, who remained free, was finally tried on the charges of possessing the two assault rifles discovered in his home by Pomona police two years before.

Harris pleaded guilty to one felony count of being a felon in possession of a gun. He was sentenced by Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Gordon Ringer to three years in state prison, but Ringer suspended the sentence and instead placed Harris on three years supervised probation. Again, a condition of probation was that Harris was not to possess firearms. Harris was also given 180 days in jail.

"You'll do 180 days in County Jail," said Ringer. "No work furlough. No work release. No county parole."

But Ringer stayed the jail time for a month to give Harris time to straighten out his personal affairs and on Aug. 4 the judge granted a motion to modify the sentence to 120 days at a private halfway house to be served Wednesdays through Saturdays at Harris' expense.

Still in Business

Harris served the halfway house time but, according to a federal search warrant affidavit filed last January, has continued to deal in firearms. The affidavit says that Harris drives a 1988 Lincoln Town Car as well as a 1988 Mustang and sometimes conducts his weapons business by car phone.

The affidavit maintains that Harris used a woman acquaintance -- sometimes paying her with cocaine -- to buy handguns for him. The woman apparently was able to pass the state-required criminal background check that is made before a handgun can be legally purchased.

The federal affidavit alleges that when Harris and his female companion were apprehended with three brand new handguns on March 7, 1988, Harris admitted the weapons had been purchased for a known narcotics dealer.

"Harris added that he was supposed to telephone (the drug dealer) on his car phone once he got the firearms and then meet him to make delivery," says the affidavit. "Harris stated that (the drug dealer) had already paid him for these firearms and that he had sold (the drug dealer) other firearms in the recent past."

Drug Dealer Arrested

Harris then led federal agents to the narcotics dealer, according to the affidavit, and delivered the handguns to him while agents waited nearby to arrest the dealer on firearms charges.

The affidavit alleges that Harris continued to arrange purchases and sales of guns through last fall and winter and finally on Jan. 23, firearms agents searched his home with a federal warrant.

The results must have been disappointing to the agents. They found a couple of hundred rounds of ammunition, several gun bags and cases, a couple of holsters, but no guns.

Still, the agents apparently think they have enough on Harris to make a federal firearms case stick. They turned their information over to a federal prosecutor this month for consideration as a grand jury case.

Harris, in the meantime, is still free.

He sat on the front porch of his home one recent morning, one eye on a reporter and the other askew, gazing off it seemed toward the traffic rolling by on Redondo Boulevard.

"The feds have been trying to build a case on me," he said. "They've been trying to nail me with something."

But Harris insists that he is innocent and says he doesn't mess with guns anymore.

GRAPHIC: Photo, Willie Ed Harris JOSE GALVEZ / Los Angeles Times

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

3RD STORY of Focus printed in FULL format.

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Copyright 1989 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Public Health Reports

March, 1989

SECTION: Vol. 104 ; No. 2 ; Pg. 111; ISSN: 0033-3549

LENGTH: 7821 words

HEADLINE: Firearms injuries and deaths: a critical public health issue.

BODY:

Firearms Injuries and Deaths: A Critical Public Health Issue

Synopsis

The prevention of firearm deaths and injuries is one of the most complex and controversial issues facing the public health profession in recent years. Laws have been enacted to control or discourage private gun ownership, and especially to eliminate guns from the hands of criminals, but the laws' effects in reducing crime and firearm-related injuries and deaths have been disappointing. Gunshot wounds are the 12th leading cause of death in the United States and more than half of all suicides are committed with guns. There are virtually no reliable data on the number of nonfatal firearm injuries. One of the most troubling aspects of handgun violence is that children often are the victims.

Educational efforts have been attempted to promote the safer use of firearms, but they have not led to a significant reduction in the number of fatalities, since most firearm incidents are intended to do harm.

"FEW HEALTH ISSUES in our recent history have engendered as complex and lasting a controversy as that surrounding the prevention of firearm deaths and injuries. Through individual and collective action, health professionals can become a potent force to control this epidemic of modern times" 1 . There is unquestionably a need to treat this public health matter with as much urgency as any dread disease.

Accurate figures are not available, but there are perhaps 180 to 200 million firearms in the United States, of which 55 to 60 million are handguns 2,3 . In the wake of the increasing incidence of gun-related violent crimes and accidental and intentional deaths and injuries, laws have been enacted to control or discourage private gun ownership, especially by criminals.

Gun-control proponents contend that increasing rates of firearm-related homicides and suicides are related to increasing availability of firearms. Nationwide, firearms are involved in 58 percent of all homicides and 57 percent of all suicides. Moreover, high rates of homicides, suicides, and unintentional deaths from firearms correlate with high regional or local rates of gun ownership 4 . Proponents also contend that guns produce more crime than they

prevent. While there is no way of determining how many crimes may have been deterred because of gun ownership 5 , a survey is believed possible (using a sampling frame of the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago) (personal communication from G.J. Wintemute, MD, University of California, Davis, Aug. 3, 1987).

Gun-control opponents argue that such laws abrogate citizens' rights under the Constitution to bear arms in peacetime. They also cite data showing that handguns are not a major cause of injuries and deaths, particularly when compared with cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and accidents involving automobiles, falls, drownings, and fires.

However, available data appears to indicate otherwise (see table). In a recent symposium on the subject of gun control, Kaplan 5 raised a number of questions that need consideration.

- * What effect would the complete absence of guns have on domestic violence or predatory crimes?

- * Would gun control laws, even if enforced successfully and completely, reduce crimes by those who are the greatest threat to society?

- * If only some firearms were less available, would criminals turn to unrestricted weapons, such as shotguns and rifles, which are more likely to kill than handguns, and whose barrels can be shortened for concealability?

- * If deprived of guns entirely, would assailants use another type of weapon doing as much damage?

Guns, both handguns and long guns, irrefutably are extremely dangerous and capable of causing unacceptable and unnecessary numbers of injuries and fatalities, even when used by responsible persons. If society hopes or intends to reduce significantly the number of firearm-related injuries and deaths, it might be willing to remove guns, especially handguns, from the hands of persons who are a threat to society, and to remove from society those persons who threaten the public with guns or other lethal weapons. Meanwhile, the education of legitimate firearms owners and users in the proper handling and storing of firearms must continue, which might help to reduce unnecessary deaths and injuries.

Extent and Consequences

Fatalities. In 1983, firearm injuries were ranked among the 12 leading causes of death in the United States 6 . Compared to all other causes of accidental death, firearm accidents ranked among the top 10. Exactly where firearm accidents rank is uncertain because of differences in definitions and reporting 3 .

The number of fatal firearm accidents among civilians in the United States held nearly steady at approximately 2,200 per year from 1936 until 1966. The rate, however, actually declined from about 2.2 to 1.4 per 100,000 persons in that period because of population growth. The number of deaths annually increased to 2,400 in 1966 and to 2,900 in 1967. The increase in the number of firearm-related homicides closely paralleled the increase in the number of all

homicides in the period 1962-68 7 .

Kellerman and Reay studied the epidemiology of deaths from firearms in the home by reviewing all gunshot deaths in the State of Washington in the period 1978-83. Of the 743 firearm-related deaths, 70.5 percent of which were caused by handguns, 398 deaths, or 54 percent, occurred in the home where the firearm was kept, and only 9 of the 398, or 2.3 percent, were justifiable homicides. In other words, for every firearm homicide related to self-protection, there were 1.3 accidental deaths, 4.6 criminal homicides, and 37 suicides 8 .

An analysis of 26,442 firearm deaths among California residents from 1977 through 1983 disclosed that firearms were the number one cause of death for black men aged 25 to 34 years and black women aged 15 to 24 years. Firearms were among the top 10 causes of death in the State; moreover, its firearm homicide, suicide, and unintentional death rates were similar to the median for all States 1 .

In another study, the accidental firearm fatality rate increased three-fold in Cuyahoga County, OH, in the period 1967-73 9 . The deaths, which occurred most commonly among those aged 25 to 34 years, were more frequent in the central city (Cleveland) than in the suburbs, usually took place within the home, and were more prevalent among men, especially nonwhites. About one-half of the adults had been drinking alcohol at the time of the fatality.

The authors of the study believed that the frequency of fatalities was related to increased availability of handguns (1 retail dealer was said to have been selling 30 to 40 handguns per day, 7 days a week). They also believed that the presence of a loaded weapon was more likely to be associated with an accidental death than with killing an intruder (about 41 percent of the accidental deaths for children up to age 15 years and about 70 percent of accidental deaths of adults were from self-inflicted gunshots.)

Paulson and Rushforth reported similar findings for the period 1958-82 10 . When Rushforth and coworkers analyzed homicide patterns in Cuyahoga County, OH, for the period 1958-74, the trends noted were consistent with those in other metropolitan counties, and the increased use of handguns was the factor most consistently associated with those trends 11 . Firearms were used more frequently and firearm deaths were more prevalent than other modes of killing males (such as by cutting or piercing weapons), but there was a greater relative increase in homicides using objects other than firearms and knives among white women in cities. Although the homicide rate increased during the period 1958-74, the proportion of white male victims of felonious homicide who were killed by firearms rather than by other weapons was constant at about 76 percent, but the rate of killings increased 6-fold. Overall, the increase in homicide rates was not believed to result solely from an increase in firearm deaths.

An examination of firearm fatalities in South Carolina in the period 1970-78 disclosed 5,808 deaths, either accidental, homicide, suicide, or from undetermined cause, for an average incidence of 645 fatalities per year, or a rate of 23.4 per 100,000 population. In 1975, firearms were the sixth leading specific cause of all deaths, a rate of 2.9 percent. Significant declines in the fatality rates during the 1970s allegedly resulted from decreases in rates for nonwhites 12 .

Fatalities among children. One of the more troubling aspects of handgun violence is the fact that children very often are the victims of fatal gunshot wounds, self-inflicted either intentionally or accidentally, or received as innocent bystanders in scenes of domestic or street violence. Schetky noted

that gun accidents are the fifth leading cause of death in young children 13 .

Most unintentional firearm deaths among children younger than 15 years resulted from guns used in play that had been left loaded and not locked up. The 88 cases of such deaths in one study represented 64 percent of all unintentional firearm deaths and 19 percent of all firearm deaths in California in the period 1977-83 14 . The gun wielder was another family member in 24 percent of the deaths, was a playmate in 35 percent, and 70 percent of the gun wielders were boys aged 10 to 14 years. The authors found that unintentional deaths of friends and family members in the home were up to 6 times more common than shootings of criminals.

To verify the extent of the firearms hazard in their community, Patterson and Smith surveyed 150 families who attended the pediatric clinic at the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston. The authors found that 38 percent of the families had at least one gun in the home; 55 percent of this group said that their guns were always loaded; and 10 percent said that their weapons were loaded, unlocked, and within reach of a child 15 .

Of 210 cases of accidental gunshot deaths (39 percent were handgun-related) in North Carolina in the period 1976-80, 94 were self-inflicted and 116 were inflicted by others. Most of the victims were white men, and 31 percent were younger than 15 years. In 16 percent of the accidents involving children, the victims were playing with guns, while in 14 percent of the accidents the weapons were dropped or mishandled 16 .

Paulson and Rushforth, in their review of homicides in Cuyahoga County, OH, in the period 1958-82, found that among children who were victims of homicide, more than 15 percent of those younger than 4 years, 49 percent of those 5 to 9 years, and 63 percent of those 10 to 14 years died of firearm injuries, and 55 percent of those were from handguns 10 .

Suicide. Depression and chronic alcoholism are reported to be the major reasons Americans commit or attempt suicide 17 . As of 1982, the annual number of suicides in this country was 28,000, a significant number of whom were young or old. Almost 50,000 persons 15 to 24 years old committed suicide in the period 1970-80; the number and rate for young adults (20 to 24 years) was twice that for teenagers (15 to 19 years). The greatest proportion of suicides among both men and women was committed with a firearm 18 . The firearm suicide rate among those of both sexes aged 15 to 24 years roughly paralleled the rate for all other means, but it increased by 139 percent in the period 1933-82. The rate for means other than firearms increased 32 percent. Beginning in 1970, however, the firearm suicide rate for those in this age group, especially men, rose dramatically compared to the rise for other means, and about 3 times faster for 15- to 19-year-olds, and 10 times faster for 20- to 24-year-olds 19 .

One explanation for the rise has been a concomitant increase in the availability of firearms. However, much of the available data are inadequate for

indicating more than a suggested causal relationship, in part because statistics on suicide are underestimated. Firearms have been the traditional method of suicide for 10- to 14-year-old males and 10- to 24-year-old females. Overall growth in suicide rates has slowed since 1980, and suicide rates related to the use of firearms are only slightly higher than those for other means 19 .

The same authors also investigated specific suicide methods among adolescents by breaking the data down into 5-year age groups, rather than the usual 10-year grouping 20 . Boyd and Moscicki urged physicians treating depressed or potentially suicidal patients to inquire about the availability of weapons and to try to prevent access.

Markush and Bartolucci compared the prevalence of firearms with the regional incidence of suicide and determined that a significant demographic relationship between firearms and suicide applied only to white males 21,22 . The availability of alcohol and the increasing prevalence of its abuse also may be a significant reason for the rising suicide rate among minors. In 1960-83, firearms victims 10 to 19 years old in Allegheny County, PA, were about five times more likely to have been drinking beforehand than nonfirearm victims 23 .

For anyone intent on suicide, firearms are an assured means of death; about half of the victims choose this method 7 . Had these same persons resorted to less immediate means because of the lack of availability of guns, their lives may have been more likely to be saved. A limited number of those who receive speedy emergency treatment are glad to be alive and may not try again 24 . Because hanging, asphyxiation, and drowning can be as irreversible as using a gun if intervention is not in time, the number of suicides may not be reduced significantly because of a lack of firearms as long as persons intent on dying can find a lethal means 7 . Availability of a firearm is probably a big factor in the cases of those who are highly impulsive, and for whom intentions of suicide occur less than 24 hours before the event 25 .

Injuries. Because of errors and reporting system incompatibilities, there are virtually no reliable data available on the numbers of nonfatal firearm injuries. Existing data are often misclassified or incompatible between systems 26 . Nonfatal injuries from firearms are presumed to greatly outnumber fatal injuries from firearms. In a relatively small study, Waller and Whorton 27 found that 6 percent of unintentional gunshot wounds were fatal. The figure probably is little different today. In 1968, nonfatal injuries from firearms were estimated to be 3 times more common than deaths; in 1972, the ratio was 5:1 28 .

The "best guess" of Wright and Rossi 29 for 1975 was 170,000 + or - 75,000 injuries, and 30 times more injuries were inflicted by knives and other penetrating weapons than by guns. In the absence of an adequate database, only the crudest estimates are available on which to formulate legislative policy and shape efforts to change this aspect of society 28 .

Inadequate government funding can be blamed for much of the lack of research and data collection. The disparity in the allocation of Federal grant money for this purpose is stressed in Jagger's comparison of National Institutes of Health research grants for firearm injuries versus five "low-frequency infectious diseases" (LID) (cholera, diphtheria, poliomyelitis, congenital rubella syndrome, and rabies). There were more than 198,000 firearm injuries compared to 17 cases of LID, yet LIDs were the subject of 19 NIH grants while firearm

injuries were the subject of none 28 . An early study disclosed that in California only motor vehicle crashes and falls surpassed firearms as a cause of spinal cord injuries 23 . At the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, however, 24 percent of admissions were for treatment of spinal cord injuries from gunshot wounds, compared with 20 percent for those related to automobile accidents 30 .

Firearms and Violence

According to Kleck, there is little evidence to show that the possession of a gun will trigger aggression in its user 31 . Instead, the gun, especially insofar as robberies are concerned, may inhibit as well as stimulate aggression. He contends that robbers with guns are less likely to assault their victims than those armed with other weapons. Weak assailants are more apt to use guns when their intended victims are stronger than they are (for instance, women against men, and the elderly against youths). Kleck also believes that it may not be entirely plausible to conclude that guns are really more deadly than knives, because the gun may be used in situations where the intent is to inflict more serious bodily harm. Consider, however, the findings from a study of 1,639 cases of interpersonal violence in Denmark; 60 percent of the incidents involving firearms were lethal, and no more than 7 percent involving knives were lethal 32 . These figures are supported by Newton and Zimring, who have asserted that the use of guns is 5 times more likely to result in death than the use of knives 7 .

Crimes committed in residences have been increasing sharply, in line with the numbers of homes with firearms, which may indicate that guns in the hands of home owners do not necessarily deter crime. More likely, the opposite is true 7 . Incidents involving civilians using guns against criminals, although highly publicized by news media, may be based on inadequate data. Unpublished data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1983 indicate that there were 490 justifiable homicides (that is, "excusable") by civilians (422 with firearms) during 1981; there is no way of knowing how many of these were in self-defense because data of this type are not collected. In Detroit alone, of 297 excusable homicides, 124 were justifiably committed by civilians and only a very small number of these were believed to be accidental 31 .

The 25 accidental deaths from home firearm accidents in Detroit in 1967 exceeded the number of residential robbers and burglars killed in 4 1/2 years 23 . One argument is that if homeowners did shoot and kill some burglars and robbers, one could infer that robbers might perceive an armed victim as a threat and avoid him or her; burglars would not expect to have a confrontation 7 . However, both burglars and robbers would be more likely to carry guns if they expected their victims to be armed.

Business burglaries are more prevalent nationwide than robberies, according to the Small Business Administration; usually the crime takes place when the premises are not occupied by guards or operating personnel, in which case guns would offer no protective value 7 .

Educational Programs

Numerous organizations have developed, or are in the process of preparing, educational materials and programs on proper storing and handling of firearms. The largest group, the National Rifle Association (NRA), supports more than 2,000 civilian rifle clubs and trains more than 96,000 teenagers annually 3 .

The American Legion offers the NRA's basic firearms education courses at local posts.

The Police Executive Research Forum and the Handgun Information Center (HIC) are nonprofit organizations dedicated to public information and education about handguns and handgun violence. One of the most ambitious recent community education projects was developed jointly by these two organizations. A citywide campaign was conducted in Charlotte, NC, during the entire month of April 1985. Program planning and post-critique, including a discussion of difficulties that were encountered, are presented in "Handgun Safety Campaign: Program Manual" 33 . For communities interested in this or similar programs, HIC will provide partial funding to "fill gaps in local campaign resources" and possibly to match local funds. HIC also will provide copies of its brochure and news media materials to law enforcement agencies at nominal cost.

The Foundation for Handgun Education, another nonprofit educational organization dedicated to reducing handgun violence, operates in conjunction with the National Coalition to Ban Handguns. The coalition is composed of 31 national educational, religious, medical, and professional organizations whose common goal is to prevent needless injuries and loss of life from handgun violence. The foundation also acts as a clearinghouse for firearms litigation information. The foundation has recently begun in Cleveland phase one of a national education campaign to heighten the public's awareness of handgun risks and to "change the attitudes and behaviors of the American people." This city was selected as a marketing research model because it has a high incidence of handgun-related violence 34 .

Effectiveness. The Charlotte program was evaluated by Vogel and Dean 35 , who tested its effectiveness against five hypotheses. This program, of questionable merit because it used nonstandard methods and relied on self-reporting of personal behavior, showed statistical significance in only one of the five hypotheses, that is, those persons exposed to the campaign were more likely to lock up their guns. Most of the controversy raised by the citizens of Charlotte dealt with the recommendation to store the guns and ammunition in separate locations as a means of improving safety.

Wintemute and Teret believe it unlikely that "expanded educational efforts to promote the safe use of firearms will lead to significant future reductions in firearm deaths," because more than 95 percent of the firearms incidents are intended to do harm 1 .

Crime-Deterrent Legislation

Legislative efforts to control possession of handguns. More than 20,000 Federal, State, and local gun laws in the United States deal with the sale, distribution, and use of firearms--more laws than anywhere else in the world. Most States have some form of firearm control; Massachusetts passed the first law in the 1600s, Kentucky in 1813, Indiana in 1819, and Arkansas and Georgia in 1837 7 .

Over the years, a number of polls have shown that the general population is in favor of controls, yet Congress usually has responded only after sensational acts of violence have occurred. Most of the proposed legislation, especially relating to handguns, has encountered stiff opposition and has been either

defeated entirely or watered down to the point of ineffectual control. More important, most gun-control legislation has been aimed at the use of guns after they have been placed in circulation, not before their introduction in the market. The National Firearms Act of 1934, for example, was enacted during the reign of the Capone-era mobsters to cope with the civilian ownership of "gangster-type" automatic weapons; however, it emerged as a tax measure 36,7 .

The Federal Firearms Act of 1938 regulates interstate shipment and receipt of firearms. The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 and the Gun Control Act of 1968 were prompted by assassinations in the 1960s 36 . Newton and Zimring have provided a detailed discussion of the scope and effectiveness of Federal as well as foreign firearms legislation and its administration 7 .

The nation's first gun-control laws and many of today's municipal laws proscribe the "place and manner" of carrying and using firearms to prevent illegitimate use. "Permissive" laws rely on ownership permits, which are denied to certain relatively small, definable groups who are presumed to be unacceptable risks to society. Unfortunately, purchasers are not required to prove they are not in a high-risk group.

Thus, an alternative is a "restrictive" law that does require proof of character and a valid, justifiable reason for ownership. "Registration" complements the licensing process and is one of the cheapest options to administer, but it is not a popular approach and no one can be certain about how effective it would be. Such laws assume that registered owners will be responsible about storage and transfer of their weapons in order that they not fall into the wrong hands. The "transfer-notice" in place of registration is meant to report whenever a gun is given, sold, lost, or stolen. Transfer notice is thought to be simpler and less burdensome to owners and its records cheaper to maintain, making it possibly more feasible than registration 37 . How effective compliance would be with either system is not known 7 . However, controls will probably remain ineffectual as long as interstate traffic in arms sales continues 37 .

Legislative options have been proposed to correct inadequacies in the current situation. Among them are (a) regulating the manufacturing and importing of firearms and barring the interstate flow of firearms to "unqualified buyers;" (b) requiring dealers to verify a buyer's place of residence; (c) substantially increasing the cost of a dealer's license; (d) requiring that all private sales be conducted through firearm dealers 30 ; and (e) holding individual firearm manufacturers, distributors, and owners liable in instances of wrongful deaths or injuries resulting from the use of weapons identified with them 38 .

Effectiveness. The Comptroller General's Report to Congress in 1978 on the effectiveness and costs of handgun control pointed out "strong and widespread disagreement" about the effectiveness and costs of various measures for gun control in the United States. The report analyzed the various means of reducing gun-related crime, the extent to which firearms were used in violent crimes, and the relationships between firearm availability, violent crime, and handgun control 36 .

The report found little solid data about the number of firearms and firearm owners in the United States, and only a few empirical studies on evaluation of gun-control laws. None of the studies showed decreased levels of violence because of gun control measures, and the report acknowledged that it was too

soon to evaluate properly the influence of more severe or mandatory sentencing measures. The report concluded that gun control does not seem to be the answer to national levels of crime, inasmuch as the roots of crime go deeply into the socioeconomic fabric of contemporary society 36 .

At the time of the report, only 20 states and the District of Columbia attempted to screen for undesirable applicants, and the screening methods were highly variable. Of the 20, only New York and Massachusetts required the applicant to provide proof of character and reason for ownership 7 .

Baltimore's "buy-back" program, from August to November 1974, in which owners were given \$ 50 for each weapon turned in and a \$ 150 bounty was paid for information leading to a confiscation, was analyzed after the program ended. Based on very limited data over a 17-month period, there was no statistically significant decrease in overall crime (such as murders, assaults, robberies, and aggravated assaults) that could be attributed to the program, no lasting decrease in firearm assaults and robberies or aggravated assaults, and no appreciable drop in the rate of murders committed with firearms 36 .

Even the most carefully drafted and enforced gun-control laws have had a questionable impact on crime. Most, while still on the books, are obsolete, unenforced, and unenforceable, undoubtedly because of a lack of uniformity nationwide and the inability of any of them to halt the interstate transport of arms 7 . According to the Project CUE of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, controls limit the availability of guns in States which have restrictive laws, but the nonuniformity of the laws and the ineffectiveness of bans on out-of-State sales does not entirely prevent the import of weapons. Officials of Project CUE contended that criminals may have been forced to use older weapons, suggesting that the project had some effect, but more extensive analysis would be necessary to confirm this contention 35 .

Current State legislation is a "hodge-podge," full of loopholes, and lacks effective enforcement 36 . The Gun Control Act of 1968 offers little improvement: it cannot halt interstate movement of arms because it does not require dealers to verify the buyer's place of residence, and it is unable to prevent non-dealers from buying arms in one State and transporting and selling in another State. Furthermore, any adult who claims some "address for business" can pay \$ 10 a year and obtain a Federal firearm dealer's license. For private sales, no licenses are required 31 .

At least 70 percent of the U.S. population is subject to gun purchase or acquisition statutes, and 66 percent is subject to a police check either before or after the purchase of a handgun. Yet the literature abounds with accounts of ineffectual enforcement. In Illinois, for example, most gun-related arrests in the period 1972-76 were for "unlawful use of a deadly weapon"; in actuality, the suspects were apprehended for another infraction, and the charges usually were for carrying a concealed weapon. 

Only about 12 percent of the persons convicted in the period 1968-73 under Chicago's gun registration ordinance (in addition to Illinois' "fairly strict" license law) served time in jail, and the mean term was 36 days. About a tenth as many were convicted for unlawful possession and about a fifth for not having a firearms owner's license. Based on an estimate 1.7 million gun owners in

Illinois, about 28 percent do not have gun licenses; therefore, about 500,000 persons could be arrested on that charge alone 31 . The situation in New York City, which like Chicago allegedly has an "extremely strict" gun control law, is no better. The bans enacted in San Francisco in 1982 (later struck down by an appellate court) and Morton Grove, IL (in 1981), although not total prohibitions because they covered only handguns, allowed firearms to be kept at home or at work. San Francisco's law, in response to the assassination of a mayor and a councilman, would seem to be a flat prohibition on the possession of any handgun and with no restriction on long guns; actually, its many exceptions that are subject to interpretation, such as private citizens of "good moral character," "for good cause," and for "business purposes," provide many loopholes for legitimate ownership. Morton Grove's law was prompted by an application to open a gun shop in the community. This law survived both State and Federal courts, but it too has a number of exceptions, the broadest of which pertain to police officers and "special agents" 39 .

Overcrowded prisons, overburdened prosecutor case loads, excessive paperwork, and other priorities for limited resources are blamed as the reasons for enforcement laxity. For example, Chicago has a special court for gun cases, but its judges are reluctant to sentence a violator of a simple gun law to prison, especially a "respectable citizen," when, for lack of space, a murderer or rapist must be released 31 .

Legislative efforts to increase penalties. Because handgun bans have turned out to be economically and politically infeasible, some gun control advocates have urged more severe punishment for persons who commit crimes while using guns. The Bartley-Fox Amendment of 1974 to Massachusetts General Law imposed a mandatory 1-year sentence, without suspension, probation, parole, or furlough, on anyone convicted of illegally carrying a gun (that is, carrying without proper identification and authorization to possess or carry a weapon).

The intent of the law was to require a finding and to prevent plea bargaining in which a judge could impose a lesser sentence than mandated. In theory, judges and parole boards no longer would be able to decide the length of sentence of the offender; the effect, however, was to shift discretion about guilt or innocence from the courts to the arresting officers and district attorneys. They became more selective of persons to be searched, reported, arrested, or charged, in order to avoid charging the "otherwise innocent" 40 .

Other States have emulated the Bartley-Fox Amendment, such as Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, New Hampshire, and the Virgin Islands. Only Maryland's law (which is most like Massachusetts' law, but without a mandatory penalty, in general, on the first offense, and with an escalating sentence with prior convictions) attempted to eliminate most of the judicial discretion. Hawaii perhaps has the harshest law: a 2- to 5-year sentence, with no probation and no required finding 41 . The Michigan Felony Firearm Statute (enacted about 1979) mandatorily added 2 years to the sentence of a convicted felon who possessed a firearm during the commission of a crime. If strictly enforced, this law should have obviated the shortcomings inherent in the Bartley-Fox Amendment. However, in practice, no differences were observed in the length of sentences imposed between crimes with or without guns; the courts merely adjusted the sentence of the primary felony downward to compensate for the mandatory 2-year addition 40 .

California Penal Code 12022, enacted in 1977, is similar to Michigan law: it

added a 1-year prison sentence for anyone, including accomplices, armed with a firearm while committing or attempting to commit a felony, and 2 years added if the weapon was actually used in the crime. However, as in Michigan, the courts in California have refused to abide by the letter of the law. California's law is not used by the courts except against the most serious of repeat offenders and then probably as a means of "throwing the book" at them. Again, perhaps judges resent this incursion, or they may believe that other weapons, such as knives and clubs, used in crimes of assault (such as homicides and rapes), are "messier and more heinous" than firearms. In other crimes, it has been reasoned that these types of laws interfere with the plea-bargaining process 40 .

The New York experience indicates that harsh or mandatory prison sentences have not proven effective deterrents against drug and other felony offenses, or in reducing the flow of illegal drugs or the overall level of serious crime. The effectiveness of such measures are further degraded by the difficulties confronting police in combating serious crimes, a large number of which are unreported, and the lack of convictions under the laws. Additionally, the costs can be staggering; the estimated costs of operating the New York City mandatory prison law in 1974 were nearly \$ 20 million for personnel and \$ 30,000 per cell for construction 41 .

Inasmuch as the criminal justice system is already overcrowded, this alternative to gun control may be doomed to failure 41 . The U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, estimated that the Federal prison system was operating at 27 to 59 percent above capacity at the end of 1986. The number of inmates at Federal and State prisons reached an all-time high of 546,659, an increase of 217,000 since 1980 41 .

Apart from prison overcrowding, leading national crime commissions oppose mandatory sentences because

- * Judges cannot base sentences on what they perceive as "individual factors" and may, therefore, dismiss or acquit the accused, or juries may fail to convict, because they believe the mandatory sentence is inappropriate to the individual or the crime.

- * Such sentences may seriously interfere with bargaining attempts to obtain a plea of guilty and thereby induce judges and prosecutors to use sub rosa means to avoid mandatory sentences.

- * The courts, as well as the police and prosecuting attorneys, may simply refuse to enforce, or may even misconstrue, the law.

- * Incarceration is ineffective and may even be counterproductive when it is applied to all crimes and most offenders 41 .

Other Means and Issues

Boston Youth Program. A demonstration project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation experimented with role-playing techniques as a possible means of handling depression and solving disputes without violence. Both depression and violence are considered potential precursors of firearm injuries, suicides, and homicides. The program, called the Boston Youth Program, was developed for 10th-grade health students in four Boston schools and one community agency.

Eightyseven percent of its participants said they enjoyed the program, 73 percent found it helpful in dealing with depression, and 63 percent found it helpful in handling anger 42 .

Improved weapons design. Irrespective of the success or failure of all other measures to reduce gun-related deaths and injuries (such as gun control and crime deterrent laws and public education), it appears prudent to require improvements or modifications to firearms designs to make them as safe as possible. Improvements should, as a minimum, indicate whether the weapon is loaded or ready to fire, function to help prevent accidental discharge, and make the weapon less concealable on the person 26 . Redesigning weapons to improve their safety would be far simpler than attempting to change the behavior of the gun owner or user, bearing in mind that children lack an understanding of the consequences and dangers of firearm use. If the Federal Government can legislate and enforce the design and manufacture of child-restraint aspirin bottles, it would seem possible to require steps to help to child-proof handguns 43 .

Tort liability. Some now advocate product liability litigation to reduce firearm crime and violence and their associated injuries and deaths 26 . A symposium devoted to the pros and cons of manufacturer liability and victim awards under tort law, with consideration for the immediate victim as well as the bystander 38 , considered the case James Brady v. John Hinkley and R. G. Industries 43

Teret and Wintemute urged that handgun manufacturers be made liable and financially responsible for injuries arising from their products, apart from the fact that the weapons functioned as intended and their dangers were not hidden. The authors contended that the manufacturer should know and should have foreseen the public health significance of his product from the extensive epidemiologic data and, therefore, should be presumed culpable 44 .

Turley and Harrison contended that the manufacturers should be responsible for acts committed by their products, inasmuch as the utility and social benefits of their products are far outweighed by the potential risks of injury and death from their misuse 43 .

"There is no greater perversion of the free enterprise system than that which seeks to reap profits from human suffering. Who should bear the cost when the products sold by these merchants of destruction accomplish exactly what they are intended to accomplish? It's time to make them pay for the wrongs which a sane society can no longer tolerate. If the notions of morality, conscience and common sense are not enough to constrain these corporations, then just maybe redistributing some of their dollars to the innocent victims of crime will suffice" 43 they said.

Three developments in the strict liability law may have "set the stage" for its application to handgun suppliers, bystander recovery, foreseeable environment of use, and the question of defect. A large body of law relating to motor vehicles and other consumer products parallels the situation with handguns and may furnish adequate legal precedence 43 .

Turley and Harrison 43 contended that strict liability or negligence suits that force the handgun manufacturers, distributors, and owners to compensate victims for wrongful gun-related injuries or deaths would make it uneconomical

to manufacture, sell, or use handguns.

Halbrook 45 is of the opposite opinion, arguing that the principles of strict liability or negligence per se cannot be applied when the defendant has complied with existing statutes. However, in *Kelley et al v. RG Industries Inc. et al*, the Maryland Court of Appeals ruled in 1985 that the "Saturday night special" was an "unreasonably dangerous product, and its manufacturers and distributors may be liable for harm that results from its use" 1. RG Industries, one of the primary manufacturers of these weapons, was eventually forced out of business.

Plastic handguns. Wintemute and coworkers 14 have called attention to an important emerging issue, the recent introduction of plastic handguns, which, if unrestrained could pose additional public health and security risk. Promoted as "dishwasher safe" and "for women to use as a self-defense weapon," plastic handguns are more readily mistaken by children for a toy, and can be used by terrorists to defeat airport and courtroom security measures. Plastic handguns, being nonmetallic, are transparent to X-ray detection devices. Several bills attempting to cope with this issue have been introduced in the 100th Congress, such as H. R. 84, H. R. 155, H. R. 1005, and S. 465.46. Tabular Data Ommitted

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GRAPHIC: Table; Twelve leading causes of death in the United States, 1983.
(table)

IAC-NUMBER: IAC 07560175

IAC-CLASS: Health

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

① on Nov 30, Clinton signed Brady bill ... requires state 5 day waiting period + criminal record check
② (next page) over half states handguns sold immediately

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2ND STORY of Focus printed in FULL format.

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November 30, 1993, Tuesday, BC cycle

LENGTH: 583 words

HEADLINE: CLINTON SIGNS BRADY HANDGUN CONTROL LAW

BYLINE: By Robert Green

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, Nov 30

BODY:

① President Clinton Tuesday signed the Brady bill setting a five-day federal waiting period for handgun sales, calling it the first step toward "taking our streets back" from violent criminals.

"When I go and sign this bill it will be step one in taking our streets back, taking our families back and reclaiming our children and our future," Clinton said at the signing ceremony as the bill's namesake, former White House Press Secretary James Brady, sat by his side in a wheelchair.

① The key feature of the bill, which passed Congress last Wednesday after a seven-year battle against the National Rifle Association and other opponents, is a provision requiring states to impose a five-day waiting period for handgun sales so that authorities may check buyers for criminal records or evidence of mental illness.

It has become synonymous with Brady and his wife Sarah, who crusaded for congressional passage of the legislation and were guests of honour at the White House ceremony.

The Bradys became gun control advocates after he was shot in the head and disabled in the 1981 attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan. Mrs Brady chairs Handgun Control, a private group that lobbied for the bill.

"What we are witnessing is more than a bill-signing. It is the end of unchecked madness," Brady said.

"One day 12 years ago my life was changed forever by a disturbed young man with a gun. Until that time I hadn't thought much about gun control or the need for gun control. Maybe if I had, I wouldn't be stuck with these damned wheels."

Clinton said the right to own guns for hunting and sporting purposes was part of "the culture of America" but added: "People have taken this important part of the life of millions of Americans and turned it into an instrument of maintaining madness. It is crazy!"

Clinton urged Congress to complete action on a Senate bill that would ban 19 types of assault weapons and provide \$22 billion to hire 100,000 police and build 10 regional prisons and military-style camps for young criminals. A joint

The Reuter Library Report, November 30, 1993

congressional committee will try to finish the bill next year.

The Brady law, which will take effect in 90 days, will apply in the 27 states that now have no waiting period or background check for handgun buyers. The other 23, which already have their own laws on background checks that are as strong or stronger, will be allowed to keep those laws. ②

They range from a 15-day waiting period in California to an instant computer check in Virginia.

The NRA and other opponents said the bill was mainly symbolic and would do little to keep criminals from getting guns, while infringing on the rights of honest gun buyers.

Sarah Brady rejected that argument in remarks to the White House audience, saying, "The Brady bill is not just symbolic. It will begin to save lives."

She said states that have background checks had stopped tens of thousands of felons from buying handguns from gun shops and gun dealers.

The Brady bill is the first federal gun control bill to become law since 1968, when Congress voted to ban handgun sales by mail to out-of-state buyers and to anyone under the age of 21. That legislation was passed in the wake of the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy.

The waiting period is intended to be replaced with a national instant record check, but it will end in five years whether or not that system is ready. The bill includes \$200 million to develop the instant background check.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: December 01, 1993

Clinton lobbied for enactment of Brady
bill on Nov 30, 1983 ... requires 5 day waiting period to
purchase handgun
& computerized
background + criminal
record checks

Page 4

3RD STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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December 14, 1993, Tuesday

SECTION: NEWS LOCAL & NATIONAL; Pg. 3A

LENGTH: 293 words

HEADLINE: OHIOAN WILL HELP STATES PUT NEW BRADY LAW INTO EFFECT

BYLINE: Roger K. Lowe; Dispatch Washington Bureau

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Ohioan Kent Markus has been hired by the Justice Department to coordinate the Clinton administration's effort to carry out the newly enacted Brady handgun law.

Markus, a native of Cleveland, announced earlier this month he was leaving his job as chief of staff for the Democratic National Committee in January. He starts his new job next month.

The Brady bill, adopted by Congress last month and signed by President Clinton two weeks ago, was a top anti-crime priority for the administration.

It sets up a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases to allow law enforcement officials to conduct background checks. It also includes some money to help states computerize their criminal records to make the background checks easier.

Law enforcement officials, however, have said the law, which goes into effect in about 2 1/2 months, isn't clear on who will do the background checks and on the procedures to follow.

Markus will work with the states on setting up the background checks as well as having a computer system for speedy checks in place within four years.

"To me, it's the best of all worlds," Markus said yesterday. "It's law, it's politics and it's policy."

Markus is a former chief of staff to Ohio Attorney General Lee Fisher, who is a member of the board of Handgun Control Inc. and a strong supporter of the Brady bill.

Markus previously practiced law and has managed several political campaigns, including Fisher's narrow 1990 victory.

Markus is leaving the National Committee during a staff shake-up. The committee is bringing in more experienced Washington political operatives. His replacement will be Debra DeLee, a Floridian who is director of governmental

The Columbus Dispatch, December 14, 1993

affairs for the National Education Association.

LOAD-DATE: July 5, 1994

Brady Bill goes into effect on 2/28/1994

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3RD STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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ABC NEWS

SHOW: ABC World News Tonight 6:30 pm ET

February 28, 1994

Transcript # 4041-7

TYPE: Package

SECTION: News

LENGTH: 669 words

HEADLINE: Brady Law Goes Into Effect Today

HIGHLIGHT:

The Brady Bill goes into effect but is expected to have little impact in many states which already have stronger gun control laws.

BODY:

PETER JENNINGS: This is the first day of the Brady law. The federal government hopes it will be just a little bit harder for criminals to obtain handguns. President Clinton used the occasion to announce a related crackdown. He is now proposing a stiff new tax on so-called 'street sweepers,' which are the high capacity, rapid-fire shotguns.

To review its main component, the Brady bill does require a five-day waiting period to allow for background checks on handgun buyers. Opponents say it will be difficult to enforce; criminals will ignore it. The new law has already made an impact on handgun sales. It has driven them up, sharply.

Here's ABC's Tom Foreman.

TOM FOREMAN, ABC News: [voice-over] The law that was supposed to limit criminal access to handguns inadvertently produced the biggest boom in gun sales the nation has ever seen. According to wholesalers, gun purchases in recent months were up 50 percent, spurred by the fear of crime and greater gun regulations.

JULIE HARDMAN, Gun Buyer: Definitely the deadline for the Brady bill is what's making me purchase one today. I have nothing to hide, but by the same sense I don't want to be going through a lot of paperwork.

TOM FOREMAN: [voice-over] Only 24 states will have to implement five-day waiting periods for gun purchases as called for in the new law. Other states already have some sort of background check or waiting period that supersedes the federal law. That is why federal authorities say most people will see little change when they go to buy a gun.

ROBERT CREIGHTON, Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms: It doesn't restrict the person

who should legally own or purchase a handgun. What it does is exclude those who shouldn't.

TOM FOREMAN: [voice-over] Still, the new law is causing concern for those who must enforce it. Small police forces which will conduct the background check say the paperwork could be overwhelming.

POLICE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE: It would bury us. It would literally bury us.

TOM FOREMAN: [voice-over] Colorado is scrambling to set up an '800' phone number for gun dealers to call for computerized background checks of customers. Lawmen hope that will simplify the procedure.

Sheriff PAT SULLIVAN, Arapahoe County, Colorado: It's going to bump into place. And when we get through that bumpy period of getting it into place, which could take most of 1994, then I think we'll look back from 1995 or 1996 and wonder what we were so concerned about.

TOM FOREMAN: [voice-over] Perhaps. But right now, there is plenty of concern that some law enforcement agencies will find complying with the Brady law so time consuming and difficult that they simply may not.

Tom Foreman, ABC News, Denver.

PETER JENNINGS: There is concern today for the hundreds of thousands of ducks who live along the shores of Chesapeake Bay in Virginia and Maryland. Naturalists say that the carcasses of 4,000 ducks have washed up on shore in the last week, killed by a disease called Avian cholera. No one knows its origins or how to prevent it. In the 1970's, an outbreak killed 150,000 ducks.

The commute to work in Washington, D.C., was tougher than usual this morning. A man threatening to blow himself up used his van to block traffic on a major bridge into the city. It was several hours before he surrendered to the police, who threw a net over him. The man, said to be from Nigeria, apparently was divorced and wanted to see his daughter.

On Wall Street today, the Dow Jones Industrials lost more than 6 points today to close at 3,832. The trading was moderate.

When we come back, smoking, nicotine and the prospect of a government crackdown on tobacco.

[Commercial break]

The preceding text has been professionally transcribed. However, although the text has been checked against an audio track, in order to meet rigid distribution and transmission deadlines, it has not yet been proofread against videotape.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: August 29, 1995

CRIME

"At last we have begun to find a way to reduce crime, forming community partnerships with local police forces to catch criminals and prevent crime. This strategy, called community policing, is clearly working. Violent crime is coming down all across America....Let's stick with a strategy that is working, and keep the crime rate coming down."

President Bill Clinton
January 23, 1996

Over the past three years, the Clinton Administration has made tremendous progress in bringing crime and drug abuse under control. The violent crime and murder rates across the country are falling, thousands of criminals have been prevented from buying guns, and more police are on the street. We must continue to move forward. For while overall crime rates are decreasing, we are witnessing more crime committed by juveniles. President Clinton is committed to stopping any attempts to roll back the progress we have made in reducing crime and will continue in his efforts to put more cops on the street and take guns, drugs and gangs off the streets.

A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT:

- Broke six years of Congressional gridlock by signing the toughest and smartest Crime Bill ever with bipartisan support and endorsements from every major law enforcement organization. This historic legislation:
 - Created the COPS program, which is putting 100,000 more community police officers in cities, towns, and rural areas -- more than 43,000 officers have already been funded.
 - Banned 19 of the deadliest assault weapons and their copies, but specifically protected more than 650 legitimate sporting weapons.
 - Provided the death penalty for drug kingpins, murderers of law enforcement officers and nearly 60 additional categories of violent felons.
 - Increased penalties for sex offenders and imposed a registration requirement for violent sexual offenders.
 - Included the Violence Against Women Act; the first national effort to reduce violence against women. The Act tripled funding for battered women's shelters, and has already provided \$26 million in state grants to bolster law enforcement, prosecution and victims services.
 - Created a nationwide 24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline that provides immediate crisis intervention, counseling and referrals.
 - Targeted career violent offenders with a "Three-Strikes-and-You're-Out" policy that keeps them behind bars for life.
 - Provided \$7.9 billion in funding for more prison cells to help states ensure that violent offenders serve their full sentences.
 - Created the Community Schools Program which promotes constructive alternatives for young people after school, in the evening, on weekends and during the summer to prevent involvement in and victimization by crime.

60,000 convicts

Fought for and signed the Brady Bill which has prevented over 60,000 convicted felons, fugitives, stalkers and other criminals from buying handguns.

Granted awards totalling \$88 million to assist states in automating and updating their criminal history record systems to prevent the sale of firearms to prohibited purchasers.

- Launched the Anti-Violent Crime Initiative that has led to the arrest and conviction of many of our most violent criminals.
- Provided grants to fight gang activity and youth violence, through the HHS Youth Gang Initiative Program and COPS/Gangs grants, and to establish a National Gang Tracking Network.
- Provided up to \$1 million to each of 10 urban police departments, through the COPS Youth Firearms Violence Initiative, to enhance community policing and enforcement efforts to address the rise of youth firearms violence.
- Initiated Operation Safe Home in which federal law enforcement agencies are working with public housing residents and managers to increase the arrest and conviction of violent and drug-related suspects so that public housing can be a safer place to live.
- Issued a Presidential Directive to enforce the "zero tolerance" measures outlined in the Gun-Free Schools Act.
- Supported school athlete drug testing before the Supreme Court, sending the message to parents and students that drug use will not be tolerated in our schools.
- Encouraged schools to consider adopting school uniform policies, which promote discipline and respect, and developed a manual for schools to assist them in establishing these policies. The manual is being distributed to 16,000 school districts.
- The number of murders fell 8% in 1995 -- one of the largest declines in more than three decades. The nation's largest cities saw their overall crime fall 6% during the same period.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD:

While overall crime rates have been dropping, young people today are increasingly the perpetrators -- and the victims -- of some of society's most violent crimes. That is why reducing juvenile crime and violence are key components of President Clinton's continuing crime-fighting agenda. The President is challenging Congress and our communities to get tough with juvenile criminals by:

- Urging Congress to pass legislation providing tougher sentences for gun-wielding drug dealers and gang members and that will restore our ability to prosecute people who bring guns into schools. (Armed Dangerous Felons Act).
- Submitting to Congress legislation that gives prosecutors the discretion to prosecute juvenile offenders as adults.