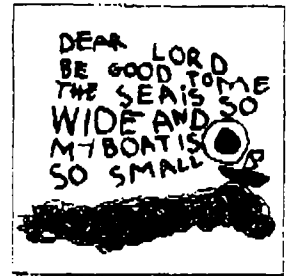


Assault
Weapon

May 2, 1994



Children's Defense Fund

Dear Representative:

I am writing to urge you to support the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act, H.R. 4296.

Guns, including assault weapons, are at the core of the increases in the deadliness of crime and violence in America. More than 50,000 American children were killed by guns between 1979 and 1991. In 1991 alone, 5,356 children ages one to 19 died from gunshot injuries. Thousands more children were injured by guns. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that there are five non-fatal gunshot injuries for every fatal one. That works out to over 26,000 children injured by guns in 1991 alone.

Guns continue to ravage the lives of countless more children, children who lose parents, siblings, relatives, friends, and role models to gun violence, as well as children whose sense of security and childhood are destroyed by gun violence. Psychologists have found that children exposed to this relentless violence are becoming sad, angry, aggressive, and uncaring, and often have trouble with school work because, having been forced to develop energy-absorbing psychological defenses against their worst fears, they lack the psychic energy required for learning.

Assault weapons in private hands contribute a good deal to the fear and terror our children face. They kill children; they injure children; and they help create the aura of inexplicable, random, and extreme violence in certain communities. These weapons of death and despair are stealing the lives, the security, the dreams, and the futures of our children.

Assault weapons are disproportionately, and increasingly, likely to be used for criminal purposes. According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, while the assault weapons banned under H.R. 4296 constitute only about 1% of all privately-owned firearms in the U.S., they accounted for 8.1% of all

25 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
Telephone 202 628 8787
Fax 202 662 3510

firearms traced to crimes in 1993.

Moreover, due to the extraordinary firepower associated with semi-automatic assault weapons, any one of these traces may correspond to multiple deaths. For instance, in Stockton, California, in 1989, Patrick Purdy used an AK-47 assault rifle to kill five children and to wound 29 others in just two minutes. That AK-47 would have showed up, if at all, as just one trace.

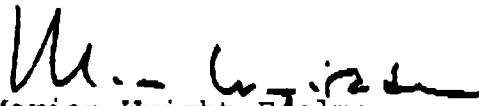
And, criminal use of assault weapons is on the rise. A recent Chicago-based study found that incidents involving high-caliber, automatic, or semi-automatic weapons accounted for most of the increase in gang-related homicides between 1987 and 1990.

Assault weapons belong only in the hands of our soldiers and law enforcement officers, and not in the hands of our children or people who kill our children. There is no legitimate argument that these weapons are needed for hunting nor that they are appropriate for personal defense. Their only civilian purpose is to kill and to terrorize Americans. They do not belong in the neighborhoods and homes of our children and families.

Please vote for H.R. 4296. The children of your district, and children across our nation, deserve to grow up safe and free of fear.

If I or my staff can provide you with additional information on this issue or other issues of importance to children, please contact Hattie Ruttenberg (662-3596) or Eileen Sweeney (662-3586).

Sincerely yours,


Marian Wright Edelman