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## Bradley Argues for Gun Control

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By Sandra Sobieraj  
Associated Press Writer  
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LOS ANGELES — Bill Bradley, standing Thursday with parents of children killed by guns, accused Al Gore of coming late and ending up weak on the emotional issue of gun control.

Framing his contrast in unusually barbed terms, Bradley said: "This is not an issue that I came to after seeing television pictures of Columbine. This is an issue that I believed as a matter of fundamental principle throughout my public life."

"I have always supported common-sense gun control. Al Gore has not always done that," Bradley said.

The Gore campaign countered that Bradley was trying to manufacture differences where none exist.

"Vice President Gore has been a strong advocate for gun safety laws," said Nathan Barankin, a spokesman for California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, co-chair of Gore's California campaign.

But spokesman Chris Lehane acknowledged that Gore's record in Congress bears little resemblance to his gun-control stance of today.

"His position changed to match the changing times," Lehane said, noting the proliferation of gun violence in the past decade. "The public looks for leaders who respond to the changing times."

Speaking to youngsters at El Sereno Middle School — parents of youngsters who were killed standing with him — Bradley said Gore voted against a 1990 bill to expand a federal ban on assault weapons and only wants to register new handguns while ignoring an estimated 60 million current weapons.

Bradley said he wants to license and register all handguns but Gore has dismissed the plan as too difficult.

"The essence of leadership is to take on that which is considered too hard to do and make it happen. That's what leaders do as opposed to politicians," Bradley said.

In addition to national registration of handguns, Bradley's plan calls for banning gun dealers from residential neighborhoods, limiting the number of guns a person can buy each year, banning small, cheap "Saturday night specials" and ordering background checks for purchases at gun shows.

As a senator, Gore in 1985 voted against a 14-day waiting period for handgun purchases and in 1990 voted against an amendment that would have prohibited the sale of large-capacity ammunition magazines and banned a dozen types of assault-style weapons.

The back-and-forth on guns came as both Democratic presidential contenders campaigned in California with an eye on the state's primary on March 7.

Back in Washington, negotiations between their campaigns for weekly debates broke down over the Gore camp's insistence that Bradley give up all television ads.

Bradley, trying to revive his campaign after losing in Iowa, New Hampshire and Delaware, instead announced new campaign ads starring former basketball star Michael Jordan.

Bradley's calculus for a comeback includes ferreting out vulnerabilities in Gore's record as a U.S. representative and senator from Tennessee. In New Hampshire, Bradley closed the gap with women voters after reminding them that Gore cast dozens of anti-abortion votes.

Bradley planned to bring back the abortion issue in a Seattle appearance on Friday, and supporters were staging 25 news conferences around the country to talk about the candidates' gun control positions.

On another issue, Bradley's campaign issued a new analysis of his and Gore's health care proposals. The statement said the University of California, Los Angeles, Center for Health Policy Research analyzed the plans at the campaign's request.

The analysis concluded that Bradley's plan would subsidize 82 percent of the 3.46 million uninsured adults in California with incomes up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level, while Gore's would help 43 percent, or 1.48 million people.

During his school visit, Bradley was joined by Margaret Ensley, Sheri Barnett and Ruett Foster, all of whom had lost children to gun violence.

Ensley, president of Mothers Against Violence in Schools, banged a miniature coffin against the lectern. "This does not have to be the legacy," she said, emphasizing her support for Bradley's proposals.

Her son, Michael Shawn Ensley, was shot to death at his high school in 1993.

Foster's 7-year-old son, Evan, was struck in the head by a bullet in 1997 as he sat in his mother's car while she signed him up for a basketball league.

Barnett's son, Tony, was shot to death in 1998.

Bradley's speech was applauded by the sixth-to-eighth graders at the

eastside school.

"Most presidents don't know about gun violence. I think he knows," said Angela Pando, 12, who lost a 15-year-old cousin in a drive-by shooting several years ago.

Students recently held a candy drive to fund a gun buyback campaign. When two students who organized the program asked how many students knew someone who had been injured or killed by a gun, more than half the 100 youngsters raised their hands.

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EDITOR'S NOTE – AP Writer Leon Drouin Keith contributed to this report.

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