

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

January 21, 2000

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

cc: [unclear]

FROM: Bruce Reed
Eric Liu

SUBJECT: Gun Licensing Proposal

Overview

This memo briefly describes the gun licensing proposal for the State of the Union. The policy, which is similar to the Vice President's, would require every purchaser of a new handgun to have a valid state-issued photo license. To get a license, one would have to pass a Brady background check and a safety training requirement. This policy would further the cause of both gun enforcement and gun safety, within limits: it applies only to handguns, only to new guns (not used), and only to purchases (not possession). We plan to include this proposal in the State of the Union and submit legislation later in the year.

Policy Description

This proposal builds on the broad acceptance of hunting and driver's licenses by creating a state-based licensing system for all handgun purchases. All handgun purchasers would be required to obtain a photo license from their state of residence, and to present this license whenever they purchase handguns from licensed and unlicensed sellers. Sales from licensed dealers would, of course, continue to require Brady background checks.

Under the proposed system, states would issue a license only if the applicant has: 1) passed a Brady background check; and 2) shown proof of having completed a certified safety course or exam. In order to pass constitutional muster, this plan would cover some of the states' initial costs, after which time it would condition certain law enforcement grant funds upon a state's participation. In states that choose not to implement licensing, federally-approved gun dealers or a federal entity like the FBI would be authorized to issue licenses. The use of carrots and sticks to encourage participation, and a federal fallback for non-participating states, closely tracks the Brady check system. (If enacted, this licensing system could require funds for implementation, which we did not request in your FY 2001 budget).

Each licensing authority would also periodically check the National Instant Check System to identify persons who, since obtaining a license, have been prohibited from possessing firearms. Prohibited persons (felons, for instance) would be notified that their license was revoked and required to surrender their firearms.

There are a few Constitutional issues to consider. First, the Brady issue (from the *Printz* decision) of whether local law enforcement could, under the 10th Amendment, be "commandeered" to carry out federal functions. Second, whether recent federalism cases on age discrimination and state immunity from lawsuits would impair our ability to do licensing. And third, whether there is a sufficient interstate commerce hook to justify federal action.

- On the first, we have designed our licensing scheme precisely to avoid the pitfalls of *Printz*. It is wholly constitutional to condition receipt of relevant federal funding (law enforcement money, for instance) upon state compliance with a federal regulatory scheme. What is unconstitutional, post-*Printz*, is simply compelling states to enact or administer the scheme. Our proposal does not mandate that states do anything; it allows them to opt out of creating a licensing scheme and creates a federal backup for such states. This is similar to the Brady system now in place.
- On the second, recent rulings on federalism and age discrimination do not have direct bearing on our plan. These rulings are about a state's sovereign immunity from suits under federal and state law (and hold that such immunity trumps even Congress's Commerce Clause power to regulate). But unlike, say, ADEA, our proposal does not create rights to be vindicated against state governments. It's true that recent cases speak to the Court's general shift toward states' rights, but that doesn't signal an actual constitutional weakness in our plan.
- On the third, documents like the gun commerce and gun trafficking reports are just some of the ample evidence of a justifiable interstate commerce link. Any licensing bill we sent up would have plenty of findings that speak to this. In the 1995 Lopez case, which POTUS may vaguely remember as an unfavorable guns/federal regulation case, it was held that the Gun-Free Schools Act posited a far too attenuated chain of inferences (guns in schools can result in crime, crime can affect the national economy by raising interstate insurance costs, discouraging interstate travel, making students less productive workers later etc.). But our licensing scheme would not suffer from this kind of implausibly forced commerce nexus.

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LICENSING

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PRESIDENT CLINTON PROPOSES STATE LICENSES FOR HANDGUN PURCHASES
January 27, 2000 -- EMBARGOED

In the State of the Union address tonight, President Clinton will propose a system of state-based licenses for handgun purchases. Under the proposal, every purchaser of a handgun must first have a valid state-issued photo license, showing that the buyer has passed a Brady background check and a gun safety training requirement. The President's proposal is part of a comprehensive strategy to keep guns out of the wrong hands and reduce gun violence and accidental shootings. The President also will highlight recent proposals to launch the largest gun enforcement initiative ever and fund the development of "smart gun" technology that can limit a gun's use to its authorized owner. Finally, he will call again on Congress to pass common-sense gun measures.

A STATE-BASED LICENSING SYSTEM FOR HANDGUN PURCHASES. President Clinton tonight will propose a state-based licensing system that would apply to all handgun purchases. Individuals seeking to buy a handgun would be required to obtain a photo license from their state of residence, and to present the license when they purchase a handgun. States would issue a license only if the applicant has: (1) passed a Brady background check; and (2) shown proof of having completed a certified safety course or exam. Under the President's proposal, state participation would be optional, not mandated. For states that choose not to participate, federally-approved gun dealers or a federal entity would be authorized to issue licenses, in an arrangement comparable to the current Brady check system.

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KEEPING CRIMINALS, FUGITIVES, AND OTHER PROHIBITED PERSONS FROM BUYING HANDGUNS. Under the President's proposal, each state licensing authority would regularly cross-check criminal history and other available records to identify license holders who, since obtaining a license, have become prohibited from possessing firearms. Prohibited persons (felons, for instance) would then lose their licenses and their firearms.

PREVENTING ACCIDENTAL SHOOTINGS AND UNAUTHORIZED GUN USE. A recent survey has shown that a third of all handgun owners leave their guns loaded and unlocked. Moreover, the accidental gun death rate of children under 15 in the United States is nine times higher than in 25 other industrialized nations combined. Under the President's plan, applicants for a handgun license would be required to complete a certified firearms safety course or exam. States or certified private entities would administer these safety courses.

HIGHLIGHTING OTHER INITIATIVES ON FIREARMS ENFORCEMENT AND SMART GUN TECHNOLOGY. The President tonight will also describe his proposal for the largest gun enforcement initiative in history. This \$280 million initiative includes: 1) 500 new ATF agents and inspectors; 2) over 1,000 new federal, state and local gun prosecutors; 3) comprehensive crime gun tracing; 4) funding increases for ballistics testing; and 5) local media campaigns. President Clinton will also call on Congress to support research in "smart gun" technologies that can limit a gun's use to its authorized owner. The President's budget provides \$10 million to fund such research. Finally, the President will emphasize again that it is long past time for Congress to pass common-sense gun measures to close the gun show loophole, ban the importation of high-capacity ammunition clips and require child safety locks.

**Handgun Licensing
Questions and Answers
January 27, 2000**

Q: Wasn't the Brady Law struck down by the Supreme Court under a scheme similar to this? Isn't your proposal unconstitutional?

A: No. The original Brady law was ruled unconstitutional because it mandated state and local law enforcement to conduct background checks on handgun purchasers until the National Instant Check System (NICS) took effect. Under our licensing proposal, state participation would be optional, not mandatory. For states that choose not to adopt a licensing system, federally-approved gun dealers or a federal entity (like the FBI) would be authorized to issue licenses. This is comparable to the way the revised Brady NICS system now operates.

Q: Are you planning to send legislation to Congress for this proposal?

A: What the President outlined tonight are the broad principles of a plan. These principles are that: 1) licensing should be state-based and a state option; 2) to get a license, a handgun purchaser must first pass a Brady background check and a gun safety requirement. We hope to work with the Congress and others to move this plan forward and to develop its details.

Q: How much will this proposal cost? And is it funded in the budget?

A: The ultimate program costs will depend on many variables: for instance, a dozen states already have some form of licensing in place, and that could significantly reduce the funding needed for what is otherwise a new program. The budget does not contain funds specifically for this proposal.

Q: Under your proposal, would showing a gun license substitute for a Brady background check at a gun store?

A: Absolutely not. This proposal would supplement and not replace Brady background checks, which would still be required for sales at federally-licensed gun dealers. In addition, under the President's proposal, each state licensing authority would regularly cross-check criminal history and other available records to identify license holders who, since obtaining a license, have become prohibited from possessing firearms. Prohibited persons (felons, for instance) would then lose their licenses and their firearms.

Q: How do you know criminals won't just produce fake licenses?

A: As with other forms of identification, states have an interest in producing licenses that are difficult to counterfeit. And while no identification is absolutely foolproof, requiring handgun purchasers to produce a handgun license before they are able to buy a gun will

greatly improve upon our current system, which allows criminals to buy firearms from private sellers with no ID, no background check, and no questions asked.

Q: How would you know if private sellers would actually require buyers to show a license? How would you enforce this?

A: One way this licensing plan could work would be to include penalties for sellers or buyers who fail to abide by the license requirement. That is one of the issues we hope to work with Congress and others in determining. But in general, we believe that like the Brady law, our proposal will be another useful tool to keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Q: Is this registration? What is the difference between licensing and registration?

A: No, this is not registration. Registration generally requires firearms owners to register all firearms in their possession with a central government authority. Our licensing proposal would encourage states to create licensing systems that cover prospective sales, not possession, to ensure that all handgun purchasers are legally eligible to possess firearms and know how to safely handle and store them.

Q: Why didn't you embrace handgun registration instead of licensing?

A: The President has stated previously that he believes gun registration is a good idea. But he also believes that the best next step to strengthen our gun laws is a state-based licensing system to help ensure that handgun purchasers may legally possess firearms and can safely handle and store them. This will help law enforcement efforts to keep guns out of the wrong hands, and it can help prevent many accidental shootings.

Q: Aren't you doing this just to support the Vice President's proposal?

A: The President and Vice President have worked together for seven years to reduce gun violence in this country. It is no surprise that they both agree that licensing will help strengthen our nation's gun laws. And they both agree that Congress must enact long-overdue gun measures to close the gun show loophole and require child safety locks.

Q: How many states now have licensing systems?

A: We are aware of at least 12 states that already have some form of a gun licensing system: CT, HI, IL, IA, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NJ, NY and NC.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 21, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed
Eric Liu

SUBJECT: Gun Licensing Proposal

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This proposal builds on the broad acceptance of hunting and driver's licenses by creating a state-based licensing system for all handgun purchases. All handgun purchasers would be required to obtain a photo license from their state of residence, and to present this license whenever they purchase handguns from licensed and unlicensed sellers. Sales from licensed dealers would, of course, continue to require Brady background checks.

Under the proposed system, states would issue a license only if the applicant has: 1) passed a Brady background check; and 2) shown proof of having completed a certified safety course or exam. In order to pass constitutional muster, this plan would cover some of the states' initial costs, after which time it would condition certain law enforcement grant funds upon a state's participation. In states that choose not to implement licensing, federally-approved gun dealers or a federal entity like the FBI would be authorized to issue licenses. The use of carrots and sticks to encourage participation, and a federal fallback for non-participating states, closely tracks the Brady check system. (If enacted, this licensing system could require funds for implementation, which we did not request in your FY 2001 budget).

Each licensing authority would also periodically check the National Instant Check System to identify persons who, since obtaining a license, have been prohibited from possessing firearms. Prohibited persons (felons, for instance) would be notified that their license was revoked and required to surrender their firearms.

Smart Guns
Q&A
January 3, 2000

Q: Yesterday on Face the Nation, Chief of Staff John Podesta said that the Administration would be making a major commitment to smart gun technology in its budget. What more can you tell us about this? Does this in any way signal that you are moving away from passing gun legislation?

A: The President's FY 2001 budget request will include \$10 million in new funds for the Justice Department's National Institute of Justice to fund the expansion, testing, and replication of "smart gun" technologies. Smart gun technologies limit a gun's use to the proper owner – preventing accidental gun death, theft, and other unintended gun use. Several handgun manufacturers have already started to experiment with smart gun technologies. Some of these technologies use a confirmation system, such as a ring that broadcasts a security code to the gun, activation of a personal ID number, or a fingerprint recognition system to activate the gun to fire.

NIJ has already formed a partnership with Colt's Manufacturing to develop a radio frequency smart gun technology. Through this partnership, a prototype of this form of smart gun technology has been developed. The President's budget request will help to build additional partnerships with gun manufacturers to help speed the availability of smart gun technology to the average consumer. Once smart gun technology is fully developed and tested, it can help prevent law enforcement officers from having their weapons used against them, and accidental gun death and injuries from children who obtain access to a gun.

We will make it a top priority to work with the Congress to get this initiative and other firearms initiatives in the President's FY 2001 budget fully funded. However, this in no way means that we will retreat from our commitment to get common sense gun legislation passed before the 105th Congress adjourns. Sensible gun legislation will remain at the top of President Clinton's legislative priorities.

[Note: Lockhart should stay away from making comments about the Administration's attendance at the gun industry shot show to enter into ongoing gun lawsuit settlement discussions.]

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN
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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 21, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed
Eric Liu

SUBJECT: Gun Licensing Proposal

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November 2, 1999

TO: Eric

FR: Leanne/Deanne

RE: Firearms Licensing and Registration

Chavez -

GUN LICENSING /
REGISTRATION

I. GUN LICENSING

A. What is gun licensing?

Under a national firearms licensing system, no one would be permitted to purchase a firearm without a license. Congress would establish minimum standards for a licensing system, which would be implemented by the states. Proposed requirements for obtaining a license include: successful completion of a firearms safety course, background check and fingerprint identification, concrete proof of residency (two forms of ID) and a minimum age requirement of 21 (*Federal law prohibits licensed firearms dealers to sell handguns to anyone under 21 -- but doesn't extend the requirement to unlicensed gun sellers.*) Similar to a driver's license, the firearms license would be renewed regularly (bi-annually, e.g.) and would contain a photo ID and other identifying data, including address and date of birth. It may also include information on weapons owned.

A national firearms licensing system would improve both personal and public safety. It would curb accidental firearms deaths and injuries because more gun owners would be educated on how to safely use and store their firearms. It would also help curb illegal purchases of firearms on the secondary market. Since background checks are not required for private gun sales, the presentation of a license prior to the completion of any sale would add a convenient new safety layer to transactions by unlicensed sellers. Licensing, however, should never replace background checks as the primary means of checking an individual's most current restricted status because the license would only be updated on an annual basis. Also, the success of the system would rely on speedy, efficient revocation of licenses by the proper authorities (e.g. upon arrest or conviction). Otherwise, a restricted person, in the absence of a background check, could use an invalid license to obtain firearms from an unwitting private seller.

B. What legislative proposals exist on gun licensing?

Vice President Al Gore has proposed the creation of a nationally mandated, state-run system of photo licensing for all potential handgun purchasers that requires background checks and passage of a gun safety course. In Congress, Rep. Nadler introduced a licensing bill and Senator Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Marty Meehan plan to introduce a licensing/registration bill.

C. States with licensing laws: CN, HI, IL, IA, MA, MI, MN, MO, NE, NJ, NY & NC.

D. What is the Administration's position on gun licensing?

The President has frequently stated that the Vice President's gun licensing proposal is a "good idea" that he supports, and compares cars to guns on this issue. However, the Administration has not otherwise taken a position or offered a proposal on licensing.

II. GUN REGISTRATION

A. What is gun registration?

Gun registration allows for speedier and more reliable tracing of guns used in crime by requiring the centralization (national or state-by-state) of records of the sale or transfer of ownership of a specific handgun. It would allow law enforcement to trace crime guns as quickly as they would an automobile license plate by simply plugging serial numbers into a database of firearms. Currently, it takes hours or even weeks before a crime gun can be traced back to its owner. A complex gun tracing system relies upon sales records kept by licensed firearms dealers. Under Federal law, these records cannot be centralized and must stay in the possession of the licensee. Thus, the paper trail is lost on a gun when these records are inaccurate, stored improperly or when the gun is subsequently resold on the secondary market by unlicensed persons who do not have to keep records. A registration system would eliminate these problems. It would also help law enforcement to detect illegal gun traffickers through the sales database.

Gun registration involves a combination of one or more the following elements: (1) requiring handgun owners to register all of their handguns with the designated law enforcement authority; (2) mandating that all gun sales/transfers go through licensed dealers (this means background checks for private sales) and requiring them to forward sales records to the designated law enforcement authority for registration; or (3) requiring dealers to forward the records on new sales of firearms to the designated law enforcement authority for registration.

B. What legislative proposals exist on gun registration?

Senator Dianne Feinstein and Rep. Marty Meehan plan to introduce a registration/licensing bill.

C. Which states already have registration laws?

- (1) Washington, D.C., Hawaii and Louisiana require all firearms to be registered.
- (2) 21 states have varying registration for firearms sales only (something short of requiring all require all gun owners to register firearms in their possession): AL, AK, CA, CO, CN, DE, IL, IN, MD, MA, MI, MN, NH, NJ, NY, NC, PA, RI, VT, WA & WY.

D. What is the Administration's position on gun registration?

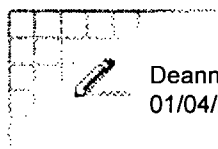
The President has frequently stated that registration is “good idea,” and that guns should be licensed like cars. The administration has not otherwise taken a formal position or put forward a proposal on registration.

Licensing the Purchaser Through the FFLs

- FFLs will issue licenses to prospective purchasers (cf. fishing or hunting licenses, issued by commercial establishments).
- The FFL will issue a license only if the individual shows that he or she can handle and store a gun safely, by passing a certified exam or providing proof of having completed a certified safety course (cf. Scuba training; some state hunting licenses). Completing a Brady check could also be a condition for a license.
- All firearms transfers must be through federal firearms licensees (FFLs), possibly with some form of intra-family exemption
- The FFL will make a sale or transfer only if
 - Purchaser has a valid license
 - Purchaser passes a time-of-purchase Brady check
- The FFL will maintain a record of the transfer and send firearms identification information for each sale (but not information about the purchaser) to the National Tracing Center.
- The FFL will also provide the purchaser with a card containing the transferred firearm's make, model and serial number. In the event that the firearm was later lost or stolen, the owner would be required to report it. Failure to report a stolen firearm would be a federal violation.
- *Optional:* FFLs will send licensing information to a federal or state licensing authority (federal if the state declines to participate). The licensing authority will conduct periodic Brady checks of licensees and revoke licenses if the holder became disqualified from possessing a firearm.

Advantages

- Brady checks will be conducted on all firearms transfers, including between all private parties
- Enables tracing of all guns in the secondary market
- Eliminates the unregulated market
- Builds on existing FFL network and minimizes the need to create a new bureaucracy
- Eliminates the need to obtain legislation in all of the States and condition law enforcement grants
- Allows for reporting of stolen firearms



Deanne E. Benos
01/04/2000 04:55:06 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP
cc: Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP
Subject: Helpful Roundup --

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(this is defendants this # stayed constant)

A much more detailed memo will be necessary for us to make any solid decisions. However, I threw this list together for you to put together the issues we discussed on licensing, registration, no gun no background check and supertracing for a quick reference. There are however, many, many other issues to vet on this. I thought that this might provide a better context from our conversation for reference:

(1) **Licensing:** These proposals consistently include photo licensing, state-based, safety courses and background checks. A license can largely be used to ensure that all gun owners are legally allowed to possess firearms, and are responsible and know how to safely use and store firearms. In the absence of a universal background check system at a gun show, for example, a license also provides an added layer of protection to ensure that the purchaser is not a felon or other restricted person (at least within the last renewal cycle for the licenses.) Right now, sales can be made to individuals with no indication of their restricted status. A phone-in check system could help make sure that licenses are valid in the absence of expanded background checks -- but this is still not a substitute for a background check that would also provide helpful tracing records.

(2) **Registration:** All guns must be registered by serial number and gun owner in a centralized location (this means that even people who currently have guns at home must come in and register them); and unless people are responsible for mailing in registration forms from their homes, it usually implies that all sales (including private sales/transfers) must go through a gun dealer with background checks and sales records and the dealer forwards on the sales record to be "registered."

Treas. (3) **No gun, no background check:** All gun sales -- including private sales -- go through a gun dealer so that a background check is conducted and so that a tracing record is made available for every sale. This proposal hits the secondary market on all fronts. It falls short of registration because not all guns/gun owners will be centralized in a database that would cut out a step in the tracing process.

(4) **Supertracing:** Whenever a gun is sold at a licensed gun dealer, the dealer must forward the sales record to a centralized state-based location to speed tracing. This does not include private sales. This is a few steps short of registration because registration requires every gun sale to go through a dealer and to be registered with a state or federal authority. Because registration includes private sales, it would also require people who aren't buying new guns to register their weapons -- this proposal only deals with new gun purchases only from licensed gun dealers. (This concept created by the VP.)

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NON COVER	RECORD N	RECORD N

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tracing -> buying
gun going thru PC.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT

CC: RON KLAHN

FROM: DAVID YASSKY

SUBJECT: PROPOSALS FOR GUN LICENSING AND REGISTRATION

DATE: JUNE 11, 1999

CME-
Licensure
Return

Summary: This memorandum describes two gun control proposals: requiring gun manufacturers to keep track of who owns the guns they produce ("manufacturer-based gun registration") and requiring gun owners to be licensed. The purpose of registration is to help law enforcement prevent illegal gun trafficking. The purpose of licensing is to ensure, with more certainty than the Brady Law, that gun buyers are legitimate individuals, and that gun owners with children are trained in firearms safety. Bills containing a similar licensing proposal, and a broader registration proposal, were introduced in 1994 and 1995 by then-Representative Chuck Schumer and then-Senator Bill Bradley.

Proposal I - Manufacturer-Based Gun Registration

This proposal would require anyone purchasing or selling a firearm to report the transaction to the gun's manufacturer. Manufacturers would be required to maintain computerized ownership records and to make these records available to law enforcement in the course of criminal investigations. In cases where the manufacturer goes out of business, the records would be transferred to the BATF or the FBI, or to the state in which the manufacturer is located.

Advantages: Registration would greatly aid law enforcement in apprehending illegal gun traffickers. Registration would also make it more difficult for criminals to obtain guns through friends or other "straw man" buyers. This proposal is intended to realize the law enforcement benefits of registration without involving the government directly. This may avoid some of the ideological opposition to gun registration.

Disadvantages: Registration would cause inconvenience to gun owners, and expose otherwise law-abiding individuals to liability for "paperwork" violations. Also, some ardent gun owners fear that registration could eventually lead to confiscation of guns by the government.

Proposal II - Gun Owner Licensing

This proposal would require anyone wanting to purchase a firearm to obtain a license similar to a driver's license. The license would be issued by the states according to federally prescribed minimum standards (states would be free to impose additional requirements). An applicant would be checked for criminal history records in the FBI and state databases. The applicant's identity would be verified using his social security number. Applicants living in households with children would be required to undergo a course in firearms safety (much as applicants for a driver's license are required to pass a road test).

The license would be valid for two years and could be renewed through the mail without any interruption in the holder's ability to buy guns. A person holding a valid license would be entitled to purchase firearms without any additional federally required background check (in other words, the license system would supersede the Brady Law).

Advantages: The license system would enable more thorough and reliable background checks than are currently conducted under the Brady instant-check system, primarily because the use of social security numbers would allow for more rigorous verification of the identity of prospective gun purchasers. This would substantially reduce the opportunities for a convicted criminal to evade the Brady Law by providing the gun dealer with a fake driver's license, or by fraudulently obtaining identification documents (for example: the perpetrator of the Empire State Building shooting a few years ago was a New York resident who traveled to Florida, obtained a driver's license using a motel address, and used that license to buy the gun used in the shooting).

In addition, requiring safety training for gun owners in households with children may reduce accidental deaths and injuries. While there is no direct evidence either supporting or rebutting this claim, there is substantial evidence that gun owners in homes with children do not store firearms safely.

Disadvantages:

- Licensing would impose inconveniences on gun purchasers. First-time applicants would have to travel to a government office (such as a Department of Motor Vehicles office) to apply, and the wait to get an initial license could be up to two weeks. After obtaining a license, however, the gun owner would no longer be required to submit to a background check for each subsequent sale.
- Permitting immediate sales to already-licensed individuals would eliminate any "cooling-off" period for such sales. This runs counter to an existing Administration proposal to require a three-day cooling-off period for all gun sales, even when the Brady criminal history check can be completed immediately.
- For applicants with children, mandating safety training will increase cost and inconvenience substantially. Two states (Connecticut and Hawaii) now require safety training for all handgun owners, and four states (Arizona, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Texas) require training in order to get a concealed carry permit.
- The policy rationale for licensing implies that the Brady Law is subject to evasion through fraud. This message may undercut efforts to take credit for the Brady Law as a major Administration accomplishment.

Possible Less Aggressive Alternative: Modifying the Brady Law to permit identity checks through social security numbers would have benefits similar to a licensing system (except to the extent safety training is required for licensing). Framing the initiative in this way, however, may reduce the public appeal of the proposal.

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Political Positioning: Like other gun control ideas, these proposals will appeal both to liberal voters and to some urban and suburban voters who are otherwise centrists. Polling has shown consistently strong support for licensing (50%-80% approval over several years) and less strong support (40%-60%) for registration. Licensing tends to poll more strongly because it is a simpler concept for the public to grasp, and because "registration" has an overly bureaucratic ring to many people. However, support for registration could be intensified, and the proposal could be given a sharper law enforcement focus, by describing it as "souped-up gun tracing."

The licensing proposal described above is similar to legislation proposed by Bradley and Schumer, except that the Bradley-Schumer bill mandated safety training for all gun owners and required license applicants to submit fingerprints (which would be more costly and time-consuming than relying on Social Security numbers to verify the applicant's identity). The Bradley-Schumer bill also proposed a gun registration program administered by the federal government. I do not know how well-known Bradley's earlier support for these initiatives is outside the D.C.-based gun control groups.

Stakeholders:

Handgun Control, Inc. (HCI): HCI has strongly supported licensing and registration for many years, although they have not focused on these proposals since the 1994 elections made gun legislation implausible. HCI's current top priority (apart from ideas now being considered in Congress) is probably a national one-handgun-a-month limit on purchases.

National Rifle Association: The NRA would strongly oppose both licensing and registration.

Law enforcement: Organizations representing police chiefs may support these initiatives, but the police unions are likely to be neutral at best. Ever since the 1994 law prohibiting individuals subject to restraining orders from possessing firearms (the "Lautenberg Amendment"), which has resulted in the dismissal of a few police officers, the police unions have been hostile to gun control.

Privacy advocates: The ACLU and smaller privacy-advocate organizations, including some linked to the Internet community, may oppose using Social Security Administration databases to verify identity in the licensing program.