

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

Gun-Control Efforts Trigger Strong NRA Drive for GOP

By JIM VANDEHEI

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—National Rifle Association President Charlton Heston peers out from the TV screen and warns: "Mr. Clinton, to you and all other candidates campaigning on an antigun, anti-NRA, anti-Second Amendment platform, you are in for the political fight of your life."

The 30-minute infomercial is part of a \$30 million NRA plan to defeat new gun laws—and Democrats inadvertently are helping foot the bill. The harder Democrats push in Congress for more restrictions on guns, the more money the ads bring in, the gun group claims.

"We will buy \$30 million on media this year and get every penny back because people are watching, calling and contributing," says Wayne LaPierre, NRA executive vice president. He says the NRA has raised \$10 million and signed up 200,000 new members in the past month by blending its lobbying and fund-raising pitch into the season's longest political ads.

This infomercial campaign—and a riskier TV "news" effort to be unveiled in coming weeks—will help bankroll what congressional Republican officials call the party's most influential grass-roots operation for the coming elections. The pro-gun lobby will spend millions of dollars on GOP candidates this year, but it is the legions of local activists that the ads are rounding up that has Republicans watching with anticipation.

The guns debate is "firing up not just our base but Republicans and Democrats both who believe we have had a culture adrift for the last 30 years," says Rep. J.C. Watts of Oklahoma. Mr. Watts, the fourth-ranking House GOP leader, will deliver the keynote speech at the NRA's May 20 convention in Charlotte, N.C.

"While they may be appealing to" gun owners, they are "alienating millions and millions of Americans who want common-sense gun legislation," says White House spokesman Jake Siewart.

The infomercials feature Mr. Heston defending the pro-gun movement against attacks from President Clinton, congressional Democrats and the media. In one, the veteran actor calls Mr. Clinton, whose face appears in black and white in the backdrop, a liar and a fraud who has misled voters on the gun debate. He winds up with a plea for money and members.

The NRA started running the infomercials on cable-TV channels such as the Nashville Network late last year. But they didn't start turning a healthy profit until Mr. Clinton escalated his war of words with the NRA several weeks ago. The continuing drive by Democrats to pass legislation mandating trigger locks and a 72-hour waiting period for guns purchased at trade shows has piqued interest, too.

Emboldened by the success of this campaign, the NRA now plans to set its sights on the mainstream media. Some of the infomercials, Mr. LaPierre says, will be transformed into "Dateline NBC"-style news programs in coming weeks. The orga-

nization plans to run them primarily in crime-ravaged urban areas. "We will match our news with their news, except ours will be the truth," he says.

The NRA also is launching a "serious news magazine" and reworking its Internet site to provide its version of "unbiased" news coverage, Mr. LaPierre says. "Our goal is to get millions of people walking precincts, knocking on doors, driving people to polls," he says. "Our success will be measured by people, not money."

While the news programs will purport to be objective, they will be financed by the gun lobby and continue to solicit new members and donations. "We are making a profit," Mr. LaPierre says, so why not roll the dice?

While antigun activists ridicule the idea of a credible NRA news show, they acknowledge the NRA has been effective in raising money and membership. In response, antigun forces are mobilizing, too.

Handgun Control Inc. has launched its own drive for members and money. On May 1, the organization raised \$700,000 in an event headlined by talk show host Rosie O'Donnell. The money will help finance a \$300,000 ad campaign that is prodding women to join the May 14 "Million Mom" marches in Washington, Denver, and Austin, Texas, to demand new gun-control laws. Protests like the "Million Mom March" are drawing in thousands of new activists and making Handgun Control a "powerful counter to the NRA," according to spokesman David Berstein.

Handgun Control plans to contribute \$2 million to candidates from its political-action committee, 10 times as much as it did in 1998. In addition, the organization, through its not-for-profit arm, plans to finance its first-ever "issue advocacy" TV blitz, says political director Joe Sudbay. "We will be a force."

Still, the gun debate appears to be a more effective motivational tool for the rejuvenated NRA. After years of decline, the organization's membership has climbed in the past year to nearly 3.5 million from 2.8 million. Its PAC is loaded with \$5.3 million, most of which will go to GOP candidates, and it is contributing record sums of unregulated "soft money."

In the past year, the NRA has doled out \$540,000 in soft money to the GOP, none to Democrats. Mr. LaPierre also served as co-chairman of the \$21 million Republican National Committee gala last week, pledging to raise \$250,000 for the RNC, which is run by operatives of Texas Gov. George W. Bush. The NRA is considering a more traditional television ad campaign that would attack vulnerable Democrats on issues unrelated to guns. One NRA lobbyist says the group is mulling ads similar to its 1992 "Jeopardy"-type spots that bashed Democrats for participating in corporate-financed junkets overseas.

But it's the NRA foot soldiers that will help GOP candidates the most. "They are easily our most powerful counter to organized labor," says a top GOP adviser.

The NRA is tapping a variety of networks beyond the TV crowd to recruit new gun owners to its election-year crusade. Federal and state disclosure laws permit the NRA to locate all licensed hunters and gun owners in states it's targeting. And individuals who sell guns or run gun shows have gladly turned over lists of customers. The NRA also plans to purchase names of subscribers to Field & Stream magazine and other hunting publications.

"We are on the cutting edge of communications in this country," according to Mr. LaPierre.

Gore's Effort to Cut Government Size Gets Mixed Review

By BOB DAVIS

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WASHINGTON—A Senate hearing bolstered Vice President Al Gore's contention that he has helped reduce the size of the federal work force, but criticized the effect of the downsizing.

A General Accounting Office review, presented at the hearing, says Mr. Gore's Reinventing Government program, called Reigo, played a role in reducing the civilian federal work force by hundreds of thousands of workers since the Clinton administration took office. Overall, the government has shrunk by about 400,000 workers since 1990. But the review also found that a "lack of strategic and work-force planning" may have impaired the ability of government agencies to achieve their "organizational missions."

Since the start of the Clinton administration, government agencies have contracted out much of the work once done by federal employees. Even counting such substitution, said Brookings Institution analyst Paul Light, the overall government work force, which includes contractors, shrank during Mr. Gore's efforts. But the main reason for the reduction, he said, was the paring down at the Defense Department after the Cold War.

"The end of the Cold War was the best thing that ever happened to Reigo," said Mr. Light.

Mr. Gore's role as Reigo chief is one of his most important White House credentials. Politically, it helps him make the argument that he is more experienced than his presumed presidential rival, Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

Mr. Gore's office, though, wouldn't permit Reigo director Morley Winograd to testify at yesterday's hearing. Mr. Winograd is a presidential staffer who isn't confirmed by the Senate. His appearance would "raise significant issues regarding the confidentiality of presidential decision making," said a letter to the lawmakers by Ronna Freiberg, Mr. Gore's legislative director. She suggested that an official from the White House budget office be asked to testify instead.

Senate Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Fred Thompson dismissed the explanation as "bogus," and threatened to subpoena Mr. Winograd. Reigo "made some modest achievements, but they're overshadowed by wildly exaggerated claims," the Tennessee Republican said. For instance, Mr. Gore's campaign Web site claims that the program "reduced the federal work force . . . to its smallest size since John F. Kennedy was president." But Mr. Light said such counts don't measure the growth of government services and the extent to which many of those services have been contracted out. "It's ridiculous to make that claim," he said.

Bush Denies He'd Toe the NRA Line

Gore Seizes on Video For Gun Control Attack

By CECI CONNOLLY
and TERRY M. NEAL
Washington Post Staff Writers

AI

MISSION VIEJO, Calif., May 4—George W. Bush was forced today to defend himself against charges that as president he would be in the pocket of the National Rifle Association, and he declared that "I'll make the decisions as to what goes on in the White House. I'll make it clear what my positions are."

Bush's quick retort came after the release of a videotape showing a top NRA official telling members that if Bush is elected in November, "we'll have a president... where we work out of their office."

Vice President Gore seized on the videotape to launch a fresh attack on his Republican rival during a campaign stop in Chicago, charging that Bush "would take the gun lobbyists out of the lobby and put them right into the Oval Office."

"Maybe," Gore added sarcastically, "he would pick [NRA President] Charlton Heston as the next surgeon general."

The vice president's advisers see the gun issue as particularly potent in key states such as California and what are likely to be the battleground states across the East and Midwest. Gore's decision to shift focus away from a planned health care speech today underscored his campaign's belief that Bush's record opposing significant restrictions on guns will play poorly among suburban and swing voters in those states.

Bush dismissed Gore's criticism as yet another attempt to "frighten people," but the presumptive Republican nominee also sought to reassure voters he is not beholden to NRA leaders. "I'll be setting up shop in the White House," Bush said at a news conference here. "It'll be my office; I'll make the decisions as to what goes on in the White House."

He also brushed off assertions by White House spokesman Joe Lockhart that gun manufacturers are abandoning negotiations with the states in the hope that Bush will succeed President Clinton and make the process moot. "I have no response to the White House uttering nonsense like that," Bush said.

But in attempting to jab back, Bush incorrectly accused Gore of once being a member of the gun organization. "I've never been a member of the NRA," Bush said in a news conference after touring a school here in Southern California. "I think Al Gore's been a member of the NRA, if I'm not mistaken."

The videotape at issue shows NRA First Vice President Kayne Robinson in a private meeting with several hundred NRA members urging them to help elect Bush because they could find no stronger ally in their fight to protect Second Amendment rights.

Handgun Control Inc. obtained a copy of the video and today turned it into an ad against the GOP presidential candidate: "Tell Governor Bush the White House is our house; it shouldn't belong to the NRA," the ad tells viewers. The 30-second commercial, which is running in a half-dozen battleground states, criticizes Bush for signing two NRA-backed bills allowing Texans to carry concealed firearms.

Bush's ties to the gun lobby have been strong since he first ran for office in 1994. Soon after becoming governor, he signed the concealed-weapons law. Last year, he signed legislation making it harder for cities to sue gun manufacturers—a position he reaffirmed today.

Like Bush, the Republican Party has developed tight alliances with the pro-gun organization, receiving

hundreds of thousands of dollars from the group in recent years. Wayne LaPierre Jr., executive vice president of the NRA, pledged \$250,000 for a recent gala that generated \$21.3 million for the Republican National Committee.

But Bush has also tried to declare his independence. After LaPierre suggested that Clinton and Gore were willing to accept a certain amount of gun violence to secure a political issue, Bush distanced himself from the remarks. Today, he speculated that he differs with many NRA members on the subject of running background checks at gun shows. "I don't know whether or not these people you're referring to support that or not, but I do what I think is right," he said.

Today's sharp exchange came as a new NBC-Wall Street Journal poll showed Gore trailing Bush slightly on the question of which candidate would do a better job dealing with guns and losing support generally among female voters, who tend to be more sensitive to the issue of gun control.

And even as Gore presented himself as a strong advocate of gun control, he faced charges of hypocrisy on the issue. As a southerner and member of Congress who taught his children how to shoot, Gore opposed gun control legislation. According to NRA records released by Republicans, Gore voted with the gun lobby 75 percent of the time from 1985 to 1992.

Gore said, however, that his and Bush's current positions go "to the heart of the difference between us." Referring to last week's GOP fundraiser, where Bush was the featured speaker, Gore said, "Not only did two of our greatest public health offenders—the NRA and big tobacco—play a major role in co-chairing Governor Bush's recent big RNC fundraiser, his agenda clearly and overwhelmingly reflects their influence."

Gore planned to speak primarily about health care today but quickly adapted his remarks to reflect the gun issue. In the altered speech, he described gun violence as a national health emergency that "is a direct result of political malpractice by close allies of the gun industry."

After arguing about guns, the two candidates resumed their debate over the future of Social Security and whether Americans should be able to control investment decisions on a small portion of their retirement accounts, as Bush advocates.

Gore has warned that a move to personal investing would jeopardize the future of Social Security and that many retirees might find themselves losing money in the process. Today, he repeated his charge that Bush "has a secret plan to privatize Social Security" and challenged Bush "to release his plan."

Bush got a bipartisan boost today when three senators recommended forming a commission to make recommendations for extending the solvency of the Social Security system that would include the creation of private investment accounts, which Bush supports. The panel would be free to consider Gore's plan to set aside much of the federal surplus to shore up the trust fund.

"This shouldn't be a partisan issue," Bush said, praising Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.), Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) and Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.). "Social Security shouldn't be used to frighten seniors."

Connolly was with Bush, Neal with Gore. Staff writer John Mintz in Washington contributed to this report.

Japanese Children Roam Alone

Crimes Prompt Questions of Custom's Safety

By KATHRYN TOLBERT
Washington Post Foreign Service

AI

TOKYO, May 4—A 6-year-old girl was traveling alone on the bus that was hijacked Wednesday in southern Japan. The 17-year-old hijacker held a knife to her neck, using her as his shield during the long ordeal that ended at dawn when police stormed the bus and freed the passengers and driver.

For all the shock expressed in Japan today at such a crime, the fact that the girl was traveling alone at age 6 raised few eyebrows. She was making her first solo bus trip, to visit her grandparents. A similar rite of passage is happening throughout Japan this month, just after the start of the Japanese school year, as 6-year-olds start commuting to school alone or with a few classmates.

The children's bright yellow caps can be seen bobbing among the morning commuters. A yellow patch pinned to their shoulders identifies them as first-graders. Sometimes anxious mothers follow at a discreet distance, but as early as next week most children will be on their own, riding public buses, changing trains and navigating crowded streets and stations.

With historically low crime rates rising in Japan, many parents say it is not as safe for children to walk the streets alone as when they themselves were small. There were a total of 32 kid-

nappings in Japan in the past five years, and in recent months several 7- and 8-year-olds have been snatched for ransom on their way home from school in widely publicized incidents.

But the annual coming-of-age ritual continues. The increased risk just means there are greater admonitions about strangers, more precautions such as not displaying children's names on belongings that would allow strangers to beckon them, and increasingly popular high-tech devices for tracking and communicating with one's child.

Schools ask parents to send first-graders on their own after a few trial runs. Many prohibit drop-offs and pickups by car because the surrounding streets are too congested. There are no school buses because children come from too many directions and distances.

"It's based on the idea that Japan is a very safe place, that it's still safe enough for children to go by themselves," said Makiko Ishii, whose 6-year-old daughter insisted on walking to school by herself on the first day. "But I know it's not true."

Ishii doesn't let her children play in the park alone, as she did as a child. But her daughter does walk the short distance to school by herself. "Elementary school is the beginning of their independence," Ishii said.

Singly or in groups, marching purposefully through a station or poking along, the children are particularly visible in Tokyo, where many children commute beyond their neighborhoods to attend the best schools.

Two weeks after Masako Shibata's 6-year-old daughter started first grade last month, the school suggested it was time for the children to come by themselves. So now Tomoka walks down the street to the bus stop, rides five minutes to Shibuya station—a hub through which 1.8 million people pass every day—walks up two broad flights of stairs during morning rush hour, runs her pass through one of the 20 wickets, gets on a local train at one of the four platforms, takes it to the fourth stop, then walks 20 minutes to school.

"The main danger is that she'll fall asleep and not get off at the right stop, so I told her to stay standing," Shibata said.

The rules to make it through the obstacle course of a day's commute to school are carefully laid out. Do not talk to strangers. If you get off at the wrong station, ask a station attendant how to get to the right platform. Do not ride escalators; take the stairs. If you miss your bus stop, don't get off at a place you don't recognize; stay on until the end of the line, then call. And the unenforceable: Don't fall asleep.

Some children carry cell phones that are programmed to dial only three numbers—home, school and office—or the newly popular prepaid cell-phone cards so children

can call home but not run up bills chatting with friends. Others have the pink and blue pagers that carry messages such as "Call home" or "Go to cram school" and can be programmed with other admonitions. No one carries more than about \$1, enough for a train or bus ride and a phone call.

The school Shizuka Sasaki's 7-

year-old daughter attends does not permit cell phones, so Sasaki signed up for a cell-phone company's "Where Are You Now" service to help her check the whereabouts of her second-grader, who commutes an hour each way. For about \$9 a month and 10 cents a call, she dials a number and, through the receiver she stitched into her daughter's knapsack, receives a faxed map with her location circled.

"I always worry," Sasaki said. "But after they are 6, children are supposed to start being independent from the mother. If you're still taking your child to school after the first month, everyone looks at you funny."

So each morning at 6:40 her husband drops their daughter off at Kichijoji station in the western suburbs, where she meets three classmates. They ride the train for 30 minutes to Shibuya station, then transfer to a bus for a 15-minute trip to school.

Because the train starts at their station, the girls can always sit down, which lessens the chance of being touched by strangers in a crowded train, Sasaki said. Once, a mentally disturbed man seemed to be watching the girls at the station each morning, so they moved their meeting place.

Special correspondent Akiko Yamamoto contributed to this report.

Relying on Bush, Gun Makers End Talks

His Presidency Could Make a Settlement Unnecessary, They Say

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Faced with lawsuits by 31 cities and counties, the nation's gun companies have broken off settlement negotiations, deciding to rely on their chances that state judges will prove sympathetic or that victory in November will go to George W. Bush.

The industry's defiance dashes the hopes of the White House and state and local governments that a recent deal with Smith & Wesson to change some of its marketing and manufacturing practices might lead other major gun companies to fall in line.

Instead, people on both sides of the litigation say, the gun companies, believing that the November elections will be crucial to their future, are holding off any further settlement talks at least until they see whether Mr. Bush wins the presidency and the Republicans maintain control of Congress.

At a minimum, the companies hope that Mr. Bush, who as governor of Texas has been a staunch defender of the industry and of gun owners, will help dampen the growing public sentiment for additional gun control.

Beyond that, their hope is that a President Bush would help push through Congress a bill outlawing municipal suits against them. As governor, Mr. Bush got just such a law through the State Legislature with the help of the National Rifle Association.

Even if those hopes are unrealized, the companies calculate, Mr. Bush would at least stop the kind of pressure the Clinton administration has put on them through Andrew M. Cuomo, the secretary of housing and urban development, to settle the suits.

Although the suits vary by city, they generally accuse the industry of failing to incorporate enough safety features in handguns and of distributing them in ways that make it easy for criminals and juveniles to buy them. The suits collectively seek many millions of dollars to reimburse the municipalities for their costs related to gun violence.

Robert Delfay, president of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the industry's trade organization, said he believed that as president Mr. Bush would work to pass a law protecting gun makers from municipal suits, "based on his actions as governor of Texas," where he signed not only similar legislation but also a tort-reform measure curbing lawsuits against corporations.

In addition, Mr. Delfay said, the gun companies are encouraged by the prospects mentioned for the Republican vice-presidential nomination, particularly Gov. Tom Ridge, who recently signed into law a measure prohibiting Pennsylvania cities from suing the firearms industry.

"The industry is looking toward the election as a watershed event on this issue," Mr. Delfay said. "If Bush wins, we could be going in a whole new direction."

Paul Januzzo, vice president and general counsel of one gun maker, Glock Inc., acknowledged that settlement negotiations had come to a halt and that the industry was hoping for sympathy from a Bush administration. Mr. Januzzo said that the negotiations had "degenerated into terrorism" with escalating demands by the plaintiffs and that he no longer trusted their lawyers or Mr. Cuomo. He said the industry viewed Mr. Bush as "anti-lawyer."

"If this can happen to us," Mr. Januzzo said, "who's next? If the lawyers are successful with the gun industry, you can be sure they will be out there claiming they have done more than anyone to change society since the Supreme Court in civil rights days."

The industry describes the suits, and the negotiations that resulted from them, as an effort by its oppo-

The presidential race becomes a big factor in the gun suits.

nents to win through the courts the kind of controls they could not get enacted in state legislatures or Congress. The companies maintain that a federal law not only barring future suits but also voiding those already filed would withstand challenge.

Mr. Bush's camp has been non-committal about whether he would back the kind of legislation the gun makers are seeking. Scott McClellan, a Bush spokesman, declined to rule out the possibility, saying simply, "He has not addressed that at the federal level."

But in a reflection of their more aggressive posture, seven of the largest handgun makers sued 16 of their municipal adversaries last week, and added New York and Connecticut — a step that led the attorneys general of those two states to say they were now considering suits of their own against the industry.

The gun makers' suit, filed in Federal District Court in Atlanta, asks that the defendants be forced to abandon new policies favoring Smith & Wesson in handgun purchases for their police. The companies contend that those policies, a result of the recent deal with Smith & Wesson, brokered by Secretary Cuomo, are an illegal effort to regulate interstate commerce.

One big risk in the gun makers' November strategy, of course, is that Mr. Bush could lose. In that case, the industry's best hope would lie in favorable treatment by judges. And so far, the industry is batting .500 with them.

Of six cases in which the courts have ruled on the industry's requests

for summary dismissal of the suits, three — involving Bridgeport, Conn., Cincinnati and Miami — have gone the industry's way. In the three other cases — involving Atlanta, Cleveland and New Orleans — the suits have been allowed to proceed.

One senior gun industry executive said a factor behind the companies' election-related strategy was that the N.R.A. "has been telling everyone not to do anything till November, that this administration is history, so don't deal with it."

Indeed, a videotape obtained by Handgun Control Inc. and first reported in today's issue of The Washington Post shows a leading official of the rifle association telling members at a closed-door meeting in February that if Mr. Bush is elected, "we'll have a president" where "we will work out of their office."

The official, Kayne Robinson, the association's first vice president and Iowa Republican chairman as well, also says on the tape that this is "a critical election," in which a Bush victory will produce "a Supreme Court that will back us to the hilt."

Aides to the Bush campaign did not immediately return phone calls last night about the video, although The Post quoted one campaign spokesman, Mr. McClellan, as saying that "neither the N.R.A. nor any special interest sets the governor's agenda."

Short of enacting federal legislation, a Bush administration and a Republican-controlled Congress could achieve the same ends through other means. One way would be to tie federal block grants for law enforcement to a condition that any city accepting the money not sue the gun companies. Federal law enforcement aid to cities and states has typically been through block grants, often with conditions attached. The Clinton administration, for example, has prided itself on providing money for the hiring of 100,000 police officers, who, under the program, were required to be assigned to community policing.

But the lawsuits are now moving through the courts, and many of the cities believe that they will hit pay dirt in the discovery process, finding material weakening the gun companies' position in the same way that documents about nicotine addiction helped force tobacco companies to settle with the states. Two of the gun cases, in Cleveland and Atlanta, have just moved into the discovery phase, in which the two sides can examine previously confidential material relevant to the claims.

"This is an industry that has never been investigated by Congress, whose executives have never been put under oath," said David Kairys, a professor at Temple University Law School who is an adviser to many of the cities. "I think they have a lot to lose."

To Aid Trade Bill, Democrat Creates Plan for Rights Panel

By JOSEPH KAHN

WASHINGTON, May 3 — With supporters of a China trade bill scrambling for every vote, a Michigan Democrat in the House is planning to introduce legislation this week that he predicts will rescue the Clinton administration's top remaining foreign policy goal from potential defeat.

The legislator, Sander M. Levin, said today that he is putting the final touches on a proposal to establish a commission with powers to review human rights, labor policies and development of the rule of law in China. After weeks of test-marketing in Congress, Mr. Levin said his proposal for parallel legislation to the trade bill could recruit enough fence-sitting Democrats to tip the balance in favor of the administration.

The bill would set up a commission consisting of nine members of each house of Congress, five presidential appointees and a full-time staff. The body would study China issues and advise both Congress and the White House on legislation or administrative steps, including United States policy on lending by the World Bank.

In a search for votes, a plan to keep the pressure on Beijing.

That would keep pressure on Beijing to comply with its trade commitments and improve human rights, Mr. Levin said.

Opponents of extending permanent normal trade relations have dismissed Mr. Levin's proposal as a fig leaf, saying the commission would have no real powers of enforcement. Both the Clinton administration and the Republican Congressional leadership had kept their distance.

But Democrats, Republicans and administration officials are now saying that the Levin proposal attracts more votes for elevating China trade relations than it loses, especially among uncommitted Democrats. House vote counters said the Levin commission had helped recruit at least 15 Democratic yes votes, badly needed ones if the administration is to reach the minimum 70 Democratic supporters it claims it must have.

Republican leaders say they can produce 140 to 150 votes for the trade bill, but will rely on Democrats to push the total over the 218 necessary to pass the House. The House vote is scheduled for late May. Approval in the Senate is seen as certain.

"I think the Levin proposal will be responsible for 15 votes and maybe more," said Robert T. Matsui, the California Democrat who is leading the effort to round up Democratic votes in the House. "It gives me what I need."

Commerce Secretary William M.

Daley, who is leading the administration's lobbying effort on the bill, today called Mr. Levin's proposal "an extremely good plan." Representative Billy Archer, the Texas Republican who heads the Ways and Means Committee, also spoke favorably about the idea at hearings on China trade.

The China trade measure also got a lift today when House and Senate negotiators agreed on details of a bill to give African and Caribbean countries wide-ranging trade benefits aimed at helping their ailing economies. The House could vote on the compromise as early as Thursday.

As many as half a dozen House Democrats have suggested that they would not vote for the China measure until the House first passed the Africa trade bill.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration announced plans to beef up the team the government employs to police compliance with trade accords, with special emphasis on China. Mr. Daley said the administration would ask for \$22 million in extra spending for trade enforcement and export promotion. Some of that money would pay for new personnel who would focus specifically on whether China meets its market-opening obligations after it enters the World Trade Organization.

Mr. Levin designed his proposal to resemble the Helsinki Commission, a joint commission of Congress and the White House set up in 1976 to monitor human rights in the Soviet bloc. The idea is to give members of Congress sway over China policy even if it agrees to sacrifice its annual review of that nation's trading rights, a step that's necessary if American companies are to benefit fully from concessions China made in its bid to join the W.T.O.

"This is something that should be an important part of our trade policy — a way to shape globalization," Mr. Levin said.

House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt had his own plan for setting up an investigation and enforcement body for trade with China with the authority to mandate sanctions if China failed to live up to its trade obligations or to international labor standards. But the Clinton administration firmly rejected any proposal that would have the power to mandate sanctions, calling that inconsistent with America's obligations under W.T.O. rules. Mr. Gephardt has said he will vote against the China trade bill.

Critics say Mr. Levin's proposal is a watered down version of Mr. Gephardt's and does not deserve broad support.

But it has elicited enthusiasm among some Republicans. Representative Doug Bereuter, a Nebraska Republican who has been working closely with Mr. Levin, said he planned to present it to the House Republican leadership for their blessing. He said the commission could sway several undecided Republicans to vote for the China bill.

In Bush, NRA Sees White House Access

By JOHN MINTZ
Washington Post Staff Writer

The National Rifle Association's second-ranking officer boasted at a closed meeting of NRA members earlier this year that if Republican nominee George W. Bush wins in November, "we'll have... a president where we work out of their office."

First Vice President Kayne Robinson, who is scheduled to succeed NRA President Charlton Heston, added that the NRA enjoys "unbelievably friendly relations" with the Texas governor. Robinson, who is also chairman of the Iowa Republican Party, made the comments Feb. 17 before 300 members in Los Angeles. He also described 2000 as "a critical election" in which Bush's success would ensure "a Supreme Court that will back us to the hilt."

Bush's presidential campaign denied he is that close to the NRA, citing instances in which he has disagreed with the group. "Neither the NRA nor any special interest sets the governor's agenda," said Bush spokesman Scott McClellan. "Governor Bush sets his agenda based on his priorities and principles."

Gun control groups say Bush has rarely strayed from NRA orthodoxy and for years has aggressively promoted its political platform. The NRA said it is proud of its ties to Bush.

"Kayne has a good relationship with the governor from their proximity for long periods in Iowa, and we at the NRA have had very good relations with George Bush over his entire public life," said chief NRA lobbyist James Baker. "Bush is very supportive of the rights of law-abiding gun owners, and he's followed his words with deeds."

Handgun Control Inc., a group that promotes firearms legislation, is featuring a tape of Robinson's comments in a nationwide television ad campaign starting today.

Firearms are emerging as one of the hottest issues in the 2000 campaign. Vice President Gore is a staunch advocate of gun control measures and a bitter critic of the NRA. Bush has taken some steps recently to distance himself from the group, even as the NRA seems to be making some headway in accusing the Clinton administration of dragging its feet in prosecuting firearms offenses.

At the same time, the NRA is becoming more openly aligned with the GOP this election season than ever before. In 1999 and 2000, the NRA has given the Republican Party \$537,500 in "soft money" donations, which can be given to political parties in unlimited amounts. Mr. Delfay said. "If Bush wins, we could be going in a whole new direction."

Of six cases in which the courts sided with the Democrats and the NRA's main GOP constituency. "NRA doesn't mean National Republican Association," California NRA lobbyist Ed Worley told the gathering. "I get in a lot of trouble for saying that."

NRA officials say they will spend more this election season than ever before—\$12 million to \$15 million, and possibly more, on ads, political donations, direct mail and phone banks. The investment is leading to rapid growth in NRA membership, they said—up 1 million, to 3.5 million.

Robinson was one of several NRA leaders who offered frank assessments of their political strategy at the Los Angeles meeting, which was videotaped. Handgun Control gave a copy of the tape to The Washington Post.

The NRA officials had traveled to California in part to speak with disgruntled members who believe that the NRA's Virginia headquarters hasn't been sufficiently aggressive or politically adept.

Their anger boiled over last year, after the NRA suffered a loss in California when Gov. Gray Davis (D) signed four gun control bills into law. Now, some NRA members there are trying to get an initiative onto the November ballot to roll back those laws. But NRA leaders, fearing that such an initiative could divert energy from other electoral priorities and likely would lose anyway, aren't helping on the ballot measure—which has angered some members there.

During the February visit, the NRA officials assured members that they will eventually help overturn the new gun laws and that NRA officials are aware of the high political stakes this year.

"We're facing a critical election," Robinson said. "All three branches of the federal government are at stake, first time in a long time. . . . There will be four, maybe five justices of the Supreme Court appointed in the first term of the next president. . . . If Gore is the president, every one of those people will be rabidly anti-gun."

"If we win, we'll have a Supreme Court that will back us to the hilt," added Robinson, a former police official in Des Moines. "If we win, we'll have a president, with at least one of the people that's running, a president where we work out of their office. Unbelievably friendly relations."

Robinson didn't mention Bush's name, but NRA officials acknowledge he was referring to the Texas governor. The two men grew close over the past year, when Bush spent long stretches of time campaigning in Iowa, where Robinson, as GOP head, oversaw the party's crucial caucuses, NRA officials said.

Robinson also said that if the GOP loses its razor-thin control of the House, it will seriously injure the NRA. "Every one of those [now-friendly] committees could be run by people that not only dislike us, but hate us," he said.

But a few congressional Democrats are fond of the NRA, and the industry is banking \$500 million with

Relations between Bush and the NRA have been warm for years. Running for governor in 1994, he promised to sign a bill that had been vetoed by the Democratic incumbent, Ann Richards, allowing Texans to carry concealed weapons. The NRA praised Bush then as a "strong pro-gun candidate," and after he won, its magazine hailed the event with the headline "Election '94: Gun Owners Win Big!"

Soon, top NRA lobbyists joined Bush as he signed the "concealed-carry" law, a top NRA priority nationwide. Last year the group applauded him for signing legislation banning Texas cities from suing gun manufacturers, and it praised his stands on such issues as gun

shows and background checks of gun buyers. The NRA's Web site commends Bush lavishly and contains smiling pictures of him with links to his official biography.

In a recent mailing, NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre urged members to send attached postcards to the two presidential candidates. The one to Bush said, "I want to thank you for your support of the Second Amendment and your tough stand against violent criminals." The Gore card said, "I strongly oppose your policy of allowing violent criminals to go free."

But Bush also supports several ideas that the NRA opposes—such as raising the age for handgun possession from 18 to 21 and banning the import of high-capacity ammunition magazines. Bush has at times sought to separate himself further from the NRA. After LaPierre told reporters in March that Clinton has "blood on his hands" for supposedly failing to prosecute criminals with guns, Bush said LaPierre "may have gone too far."

But Bush aides say he agrees with the NRA on the underlying point. "He appreciates the support of all Americans who want to reverse the Clinton-Gore administration's lax enforcement of gun laws," a Bush spokesman said.

At the Los Angeles meeting, LaPierre expressed confidence that the GOP-led Congress will do what the NRA wants—even though the group briefly stumbled last year. In the aftermath of last year's Columbine High School massacre, in which 12 students and a teacher were shot dead, the Senate humbled the NRA by voting to close a loophole under which firearms purchases at gun shows are exempt from background checks. Gore cast the crucial 51st vote, and gun control forces were exultant.

"They thought we were dead," LaPierre said—and then the NRA swung into action. "We gave them a Normandy invasion in the House," he said. "I'd walk into House offices . . . and congressmen would say, 'I got 19,000 calls at my office; I'm got you.' . . . We ended up with no gun control passing in the Congress last year."

At the meeting, NRA board member Manny Fernandez said he is confident the group will prevail in the Congress. "I think they have a lot of trouble for saving that."

Gore's Policy Team Finds Help Nearby

By CECI CONNOLLY
and GLENN KESSLER
Washington Post Staff Writers

W

When Vice President Gore's policy team wanted to develop an anti-crime initiative, they tapped Bruce Reed, a Gore ally who oversees domestic policy for President Clinton.

When the Gore campaign needed a budget guru to brief reporters on why its fiscal plan was superior to George W. Bush's plan, White House National Economic Council director Gene Sperling walked the two blocks to the National Press Club and donated two hours of his "free time" to lead the session.

And when it was time to sit down and write his broadest economic address of the campaign, Gore dialed the White House switchboard and asked for Treasury Secretary Lawrence H. Summers.

At every opportunity on the campaign trail, Gore declares his political independence, assuring audiences he is running for the presidency "on my own." He moved his headquarters to Nashville to symbolize the break with Washington and makes much ado of even the slightest policy breaks with his boss.

But Gore, resorting to a time-honored tradition, is also using the power and perks of office to craft a policy agenda, give credibility to his claims, provide a platform for a host of political pronouncements and add some intellectual and political heft to his small campaign staff.

Some, such as Summers, are also effective cheerleaders, or "validators," in the words of Gore press secretary Chris Le-

hane. Yesterday, Summers delivered what was billed as a major address on the need to pay down the national debt, which just happens to also be a key policy objective of the vice president. Summers's speech warned about the dangers of big tax cuts (which happens to be a Bush policy objective) and echoed themes in Gore's speech a week earlier, such as the notion that fiscal discipline has promoted confidence.

There's nothing illegal about employees on the public payroll doing favors for a political campaign, as long as they do it on their own time and don't use government equipment. Sperling supervised the drafting of the detailed, 15-page budget documents that accompanied his briefing, and took care to speak to reporters in the evening.

Yet Bush supporter C. Boyden Gray, who was White House counsel for Bush's father, said it is virtually impossible for high-level administration aides to claim their jobs require no more than 40 hours a week and anything beyond that should be considered "free time."

In the case of people such as Sperling and Reed, who have been integrally involved in Gore's detailed pol-

icy proposals, "is all that information coming off the top of their heads?" Gray added.

However, Gray acknowledged that Vice President Bush—just like Gore—was entitled to and did use some of the assets associated with the administration. Bush, for example, oversaw a drug task force that enabled him to travel the country at taxpayer expense discussing an issue that was also at the center of his presidential campaign. Also, during the 1988 campaign, Democrats complained that the White House budget office had analyzed a Bush campaign proposal for a "flexible freeze" after a request by the office of the vice president.

As Gore has painfully proved, having the words "vice president" in front of your name is not always an asset in a presidential campaign. For months he has struggled to climb out from Clinton's shadow, and in the eyes of many voters, the Number Two man also has a more difficult climb in demonstrating leadership skills, according to many polls.

But it is an advantage for the presumptive Democratic nominee that many of the men and women who have run the country for the past seven years are just an e-mail away. From the mun-

dane—such as schedules and photos—to the most complex domestic and international issues, Gore has a ready-made support network that costs his campaign little more than the reimbursement rates for paper and long-distance calls.

"Generally, it is more ideas, advice and input rather than blood, sweat and tears," said Gore spokesman Doug Hattaway. "These folks are experts in their fields and we welcome their input."

Administration health care experts Chris Jennings and Sarah Bianchi were at the ready last summer when Gore unveiled his children's health initiative, while Leon Fuerth, Gore's top foreign policy adviser and a staff member of the president's National Security Council, was the prime architect of the new Gore doctrine "forward engagement."

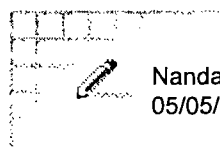
Cabinet secretaries such as Andrew M. Cuomo (Housing and Urban Development), William Daley (Commerce) and Bill Richardson (Energy) help steer announcements in Gore's direction. When Gore gave a tough environmental address in Detroit recently, EPA Administrator Carol M. Browner stood at his side and later fielded press questions on Gore's behalf.

These advantages are evident in the battle of the policy papers between the two campaigns. The budget briefing papers that Gore released this week under Sperling's guidance were extremely detailed, with year-by-year budget estimates to 2013. (The numbers for Gore's plan, however, were virtually identical to Clinton's budget.) Bush's briefing contained only five-year totals and was significantly shorter.

In theory, Gore has a strikingly small paid policy staff. It consists of former Gore aide Elaine Kamarck, an assistant to Kamarck, and Bianchi, who just left her White House job to join the campaign payroll, according to Hattaway.

Meanwhile, Bush, using his father's connections, has assembled what aides like to call a "shadow" government. Policy director Josh Bolton oversees a full-time paid staff of 10, while another 60 to 70 Republican policy experts provide advice on domestic policy issues. Bush, as a governor, has also tapped the expertise of some Texas officials to help develop some of his policy proposals.

Bush, when asked yesterday about Gore's White House help, said with a smile: "It will remind people that if they want four more years of Clinton-Gore, they will vote for him."



Nanda Chitre
05/05/2000 09:13:00 AM

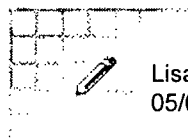
Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP, Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP, Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: NRA response to Handgun Control, May 4, 2000

----- Forwarded by Nanda Chitre/WHO/EOP on 05/05/2000 09:12 AM -----



Lisa Ferdinando
05/05/2000 09:09:34 AM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc:

Subject: NRA response to Handgun Control, May 4, 2000

NRA HOLDS NEWS CONFERENCE IN RESPONSE TO HANDGUN CONTROL INC.
MAY 4, 2000

SPEAKERS: KAYNE ROBINSON, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

ROBINSON: In addition to being the first vice president of NRA, I was a cop for 31 years, and the last about nine, an assistant chief of police.

I'm elected by the 3.5 to 4 million members of NRA. And in addition to that, I think a lot of you know there are about 20 million hunters in America that use guns and many gun collectors and competitive shooters. About 80 million gun owners all together. So we're in a pretty comfortable part of the philosophical world.

I want to tell you a piece of news that I just don't think that you probably knew before: We like George Bush better than Al Gore.

Whether George Bush will agree with us on everything is doubtful. No one always does. Ronald Reagan was very favorable to firearms owners. He owned many guns himself. But we disagreed from time to time.

But there's an important thing. As I go through the summer in Iowa, every year we have something happen at the state fair. They bring in the big pig, the giant pig, the biggest one they can find, and he's usually 900 to 1,000 pounds. And I'm sort of reminded of that as I listened to this meeting.

If you had that big pig in the barnyard and a little bitty duck sort of representing us--for the past seven years--and it's going to end up being eight years--Handgun Control and the anti-gun people have had literally unlimited access to the White House. You all know that. Press conference after press conference, working right out of the office, fund-raising, every kind of help that you can imagine. And they're complaining about us, the poor little duck.

We've been on the outside of the fence looking in. None of our statistics have ever been considered. Our point of view hasn't been considered at all. Yet it's shocking when Governor Bush agrees to consider our point of view, along with others.

ROBINSON: He's pretty famous for having all different sides come in and lay out their case.

And that was my point in the talk in California, that we are looking at having something like the kind of access to the White House--and at that time, it wasn't clear who was going to be the presidential candidate, it was going to be Bush or McCain or Forbes, at that point.

But in any event, with any of them, it was very clear that we were going to have access something approaching that which Handgun Control has enjoyed for the last seven and soon to be eight years.

That kind of access is really unprecedented. They have talked about our relationship with Bush, a relationship in one state in which the other side has been able to present their ideas. But the relationship between the anti-gun movement and the Clinton-Gore administration is unbelievable.

I mean, you have covered the press conferences. You covered the Rose Garden appearances. It's been a continuing incessant drum beat from the beginning until today. And I don't say that there is anything wrong with that. But for people like that to complain about us, who have been sitting on the outside, possibly having a seat at the table so that our views can be heard, is just a little bit hypocritical. So that's the big news, is that we might have equal access.

We have been talking to America with quite a bit of traction about two issues that are pretty interesting. There are two ways that we can put people who use guns in crime in the penitentiary and do it very easily. Bill Clinton refuses to do it. What are they?

First of all, when a criminal attempts to go and buy a gun, you will recall, Clinton says 60,000, 70,000--the figures change all the time--every year do this. And they appear at the counter of a gun store and attempt to buy a gun. And they fill out the form. And then, when it's sent in electronically, they're stopped because of their record. And once they are stopped, we can check their name off and say, well, there's another one that we stopped. And that may be true in a number of cases.

But if that's true, that person committed a federal felony by filling out that form. You have the easiest--anybody, Janet Reno could prosecute this case herself. It's very, very easy. You have a person who has filled out a form, they have displayed their driver's license, they did it in their own name, they signed it in front of an eyewitness. Now if anybody can't prosecute that case, then all cases are hopeless. That's pretty easy.

In doing that, you commit a federal felony. Well, if we have a criminal that has tried to buy a gun, why don't we prosecute that person? Let's put him in the penitentiary. NRA wants that done.

A second scenario. You all know cops, ask them this question, ask them if this isn't true. Cops all over America stop people out on the street, traffic tickets, all kinds of things. And they encounter felons carrying firearms. Well, when they do, that's a federal felony, except it's almost impossible to get a prosecution.

Now, that's completely within the purview of the president of the United States. That's what our Project Exile is about, to try and publicize and get the federal prosecutors behind the notion of, when a local police officer encounters a felon with a gun, not necessarily robbing a place, there you've got a charge that you can prosecute them with at state level, but just benignly carrying a gun, that's a federal felony.

Well, why don't we prosecute them? It's very easy. You've got a police officer as an eyewitness. You've got the gun. You've got all the evidence you need. Police officers every day in America throughout my whole career in Des Moines, many, many, many times we encountered felons with a firearm, almost impossible to get a federal prosecution. Why not take those felons off the street that are carrying guns and police officers encounter them? Why not take those felons off the street who are attempting to buy a gun at a gun dealer's counter? Take them off the street, lock them up.

Now one thing that that might expose is that an awful lot of the figures that the president throws out aren't probably exactly accurate. Probably an awful lot of those felons that they so-called stopped from buying a gun are really mistakes in the records that are cleared up some other time, and the person really wasn't a felon and of course you couldn't prosecute him. But certainly a lot of them are, according to the president. If they are, why not prosecute them? Let's put them in the penitentiary.

QUESTION: Will you be running any counter ads to basically get across the point that you're making today, which is that the, you know, Clinton-Gore administration has had the close relationship. What are your plans?

ROBINSON: Well, we won't react to this, but we do have a whole series of ads on the air which tell, among other things, tell the story of what happened in Australia and England and Canada, where little by little, by chipping away at gun rights, what happened is that the total number of gun owners in those countries have been reduced, particularly in England, to a politically insignificant group, and then they banned all guns.

That's the point of the ads, and that's the overall point of what's happening here with gun legislation. Eighty million is too formidable a political force. And so--but if you can chip away at it, and aim the sting and the inconvenience and the expense of the law almost exclusively at law abiding citizens, make them suffer, obviously every time you up the ante, a lot of them, thousands and thousands, will fall off, because they can't afford to take a half a day off to go down to the sheriff's office for whatever it is, whatever is needed to buy a gun.

I don't know--yes, sir?

QUESTION: Sir, can you tell me what you meant by the words "working out of the White House"?

ROBINSON: My feeble attempt was to make an analogy to what Handgun Control is doing.

ROBINSON: And all of our people have been complaining. We were talking to activists out in California who had been complaining that NRA is not militant enough at getting some of this stuff stopped.

Well, one of the things that they know is that any time the anti-gun movement wants to speak, it gets to speak in the White House, it gets to speak in the halls of power that are a lot different than we get to speak in. And so my feeble attempt was to say, if we elect any of these Republicans that were currently running at that point, we are going to have a seat at the table. We will have the same kind of access that Handgun Control is.

Although I have to tell you, it isn't going to be the kind of exclusive access that Handgun Control has enjoyed. It'll be access jointly. I'm sure any of those candidates looking back to who was running then are going to listen to the anti-gun people also.

QUESTION: If I can follow up on that, you're painting your relationship with George Bush as sort of an equal kind of thing on Handgun...

ROBINSON: No, no. Oh, no, no.

QUESTION: How do you respond to Nina Butts' comment that you're a sidearm to--that George Bush, rather, is a sidearm...

ROBINSON: Right. Clearly, George Bush has a record that is favorable to the Second Amendment. That doesn't mean that any kind of legislation proposed by people that are on the pro-gun side of this aisle, that George Bush will endorse or support. He very likely will oppose some things that we propose over the years.

But fundamentally, he's a supporter of the Second Amendment. I mean, that's the bottom line, is will he willingly attract legislation that damages your right to own a gun? And the answer to that is we're pretty confident no, and that's pretty good for us.

Yes, ma'am?

QUESTION: We have a certain interesting situation here, unlike some of the other issues. What you're saying and what the Handgun Control people are saying, you don't seem to disagree about that many facts. You just disagree about the implications of them and who deserves support...

ROBINSON: I was a little surprised that this is a big surprise that we support George Bush and they support Clinton--Gore and Clinton.

QUESTION: So you're not--it's not like you're taking back or feeling the need to correct...

ROBINSON: Absolutely not.

QUESTION: ... on that take?

ROBINSON: Absolutely not. We think that George Bush is more friendly to the Second Amendment than Al Gore is. And that should--I don't think that's a big news flash.

Yes, ma'am?

QUESTION: You're saying that you weren't specifically talking about George Bush in the tape.

You were talking about...

ROBINSON: I probably was in my own mind, because I've always liked George Bush as a candidate. But I'd remind you at that time you had McCain and a couple of others that were--it wasn't clear at that point who was going to be the nominee. I think that the same comment could have been said about several of the other Republican candidates. Only one was mildly critical of firearms rights. All the others were pretty favorable to the Second Amendment.

QUESTION: So would you say that people, Americans, who want to see more gun control laws should not vote for George Bush?

ROBINSON: I wouldn't adopt those words. I would say that Americans that are concerned about the death of the Second Amendment need to very carefully watch this election. Because you see, if Al Gore is elected and you could almost expect elected for a full term--two year--eight term--eight years. Gets elected once, the tradition is that it probably happens. You're talking about a 16-year war, accumulatively, on the Second Amendment, and that will very severely damage the Second Amendment, no matter how you cut it: Supreme Court justices, laws, wearing away, making it expensive, making it difficult for a law-abiding citizen to own a gun. They will make it very, very difficult.

So that's my point, is that if you elect Al Gore, that's what going to happen. If you elect George Bush, at least you'll have somebody that has, as one of his priorities, protection of the Second Amendment. Not his highest priority, not the biggest thing on his slate, but it is important to him, protecting the Second Amendment.

QUESTION: But a lot of polls show that these gun control measures are very popular. So are you, by putting it out there like that, sort of hurting...

ROBINSON: Absolutely not. Look at the state of Washington sometime back. It was very, very popular. They had a referendum. They were going to wipe out a whole bunch of gun rights. But by the time we were done telling our story, we won by two-thirds. When the people of Washington state, certainly not a rabid, conservative gun state, when they heard the story, when they heard the argument in great detail, they came down on our side of the argument, on the side of the Second Amendment, and on the side that we will assert is the freedom side.

Yes, ma'am?

QUESTION: Is it a irrational phobia that people connect with the guns, why people say that they feel safe in a society where there are fewer guns?

ROBINSON: Why they say they're safer with fewer guns? I wouldn't call it irrational. I mean, people are entitled to their views, and I certainly wouldn't call our opponents irrational.

I think you can arrive at two different conclusions: that owning a gun--and that's one of the reasons people own guns, certainly not the only one--that owning a gun can make you safer, and it doesn't mean you have to use the gun every day. You don't use your fire--home fire insurance policy perhaps in an entire lifetime, but you are responsible and you feel safer because you have it.

I'm not going to say that somebody that has a different view is irresponsible. I believe, though, that a responsible person can own a gun and can own a gun for self-defense purposes and be responsible and safe about that.

Yes, sir?

QUESTION: Your annual convention's upcoming the week after the Million Mom March. You're not allowing any foreign reporters to be credential for that. As a Canadian, I'm considered--they're not even letting me in.

ROBINSON: That's a Bill Powers answer. I know nothing about that.

POWERS: It was a decision we had to make due to the limited capacity with respect to the site. And what we had to do...

QUESTION: That's not what PR person at the NRA told me.

POWERS: I'm the director of PR at the NRA.

QUESTION: One of your people told me it was a very punitive reaction to an ambush interview...

POWERS: Well, if you have any questions, I can talk to you afterwards. I can give you my card. And if you'll notice in the media advisory that we sent out, we explained it. It was due to some limited capacity problems that we have with the convention. But I'm happy to talk to you about it.

QUESTION: OK.

ROBINSON: We get ambushed all the time, so I would doubt that that would be--let's see, this gentleman hasn't had a chance yet.

QUESTION: I just wanted to ask. Can you cite any legislation that the NRA has proposed or pushed in Texas that Governor Bush has opposed?

ROBINSON: Yes, I can. I'm not an expert at it, but I think The Washington Post this morning itemized a couple of things that he had opposed that NRA wanted to do. But I'd have to admit that with 50 states, I am definitely not up on everything that we have asked either the governor or the legislature.

But there were a couple cited in The Post article this morning. He, you know, doesn't go just down the line for any support group, because we tend to support him, but that's not his character.

QUESTION: I don't think those were issues in Texas, per se. Those were just generally issue that the NRA generally supports.

ROBINSON: OK. Well, they're issues that...

(CROSSTALK)

ROBINSON: ... but those are things that we are for and he is opposed, allegedly that was cited in the article. That's all.

QUESTION: Mr. Robinson, as a ranking member of both the Republican Party and the National Rifle Association, do you feel qualified to tell us the appeal that the leadership--present leadership of the NRA clearly represents the mainstream Republican voter?

ROBINSON: I can't answer that because we are not a Republican organization. We have had and still have many prominent Democrats. John Dingell was one of the most influential members of our board of directors for many years and still very close to NRA and is a close friend of the organization.

There've been many, many others. Every president since I think President Grant was a life member until I think Clinton took office. I mean, there've been many, many prominent Democrats that have been part of it.

The Democratic Party certainly, through its platforms and other things as an organization, is not as friendly to the Second Amendment as the Republican Party, but there are many, many very friendly Democrats.

The governor of Georgia, for example, has a--you know, we think a lot of him and he thinks a lot of us. Now, I can't tell you that he'll support everything we want to do.

Nobody is going to support everything that you want to do. And that's true of Farm Bureau, it's true of Handgun Control with the people that are friendly to them. There are many Congressmen that aren't going to support, you know, just because they propose it. And we're in the same--same position.

QUESTION: Are you convinced though that the NRA position on these issues is going to help the Republican ticket in November more than it may hurt the moderate swing vote?

ROBINSON: I can't answer that, except to tell you that we will do everything we can to support candidates that support the Second Amendment. And we'll do that in places where that help appears to be useful and helpful.

QUESTION: Sir, can you talk about the Million Mom March, how are you going to respond to it? Is this a political nightmare for you?

ROBINSON: I actually know--personally, I know absolutely nothing about the Million Mom March, so I'd be out of my water if I do that. Bill might be able to, but we tend not to react to something that other people do, except if something happens and we're around, like this press conference.

Since I was going to be personally in the video, and that--I'm flattered that I'm going to be on nationwide TV--we were here, we decided to come over. But we generally do not take out ads and things just in opposition to what someone else has done.

We devise our own plan and move forward with that.

QUESTION: But, again, how much of a political nightmare is this--you're going to be demonized for hours...

(CROSSTALK)

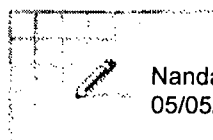
POWERS: How about we worry about next week next week?

ROBINSON: We're demonized by people who don't like us, and we're loved by people who love us, and that's just the nature of being in this kind of business, and we're very happy.

Listen, thank you all very, very much.

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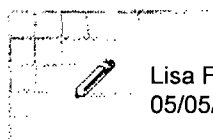


Nanda Chitre
05/05/2000 09:16:20 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP, Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP, Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP
cc:
Subject: James Brady at Handgun control news conference, May 4, 2000

----- Forwarded by Nanda Chitre/WHO/EOP on 05/05/2000 09:16 AM -----



Lisa Ferdinando
05/05/2000 09:09:27 AM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message
cc:
Subject: James Brady at Handgun control news conference, May 4, 2000

**HANDGUN CONTROL NEWS CONFERENCE ON GUN CONTROL RECORDS OF ELECTED
OFFICIALS
MAY 4, 2000**

**SPEAKERS: JIM BRADY, PRESS SECRETARY FOR
FORMER PRESIDENT REAGAN
MICHAEL BARNES, PRESIDENT, HANDGUN CONTROL
JOE SUDBAY, POLITICAL DIRECTOR, HANDGUN CONTROL**

BARNES: I am Mike Barnes, the president of Handgun Control, Inc. and the Center To Prevent Handgun Violence. I've had this job now for just two months. And I have to say that I'm honored to be in this position and to stand here today next to one of my heroes in life, Jim Brady, an extraordinary public servant. He and I are on different sides of the political aisle, but we stand together in commitment to gun safety, so that the kinds of things that have happened to Jim and his family won't happen to more families in America.

As I say, I've had this job just two months. The day I started as president of Handgun Control, six year-old Kayla Rolland was shot and killed by her classmate in Flint, Michigan. Since that time, as you know, there have been mass shootings in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Michigan, Arizona and, of course, just recently, as we know, right here in Washington, a few blocks away at the National Zoo.

Each time this happens, a disturbed, violent, or angry person, ranging from a grade school boy to senior citizens, used a firearm to destroy lives and a sense of safety in their communities.

And each time, the press has correctly noted that in the years since Columbine, since the massacre out there in Colorado, Congress has done absolutely nothing to pass what is an extremely modest package of legislation that would help keep guns out of the hands of kids and criminals in

America.

I'm not here today to preach that we need better gun laws in this country. That's obvious; it's a given. Eighty percent of the American people agree with that.

I am here today to tell you that the upcoming presidential election presents the most important choice that the American people will ever make in terms of what we as a nation will do about gun violence.

The choice for president is not of course the only choice to be made this year. Congressional elections are terribly important. Senatorial races are important. State legislative races are also important. And at a future time, we'll be briefing you on our decisions and our endorsements in those key races.

But today, I want to talk about the records of two people, Governor George W. Bush of Texas and Vice President Al Gore. We at Handgun Control Inc., rarely agree with the National Rifle Association about anything.

But we do agree about this: There has never been a more clear-cut choice between presidential candidates on the crucial issue of gun safety in America.

On the one hand, we have a vice president, who has served with distinction in an administration that passed the Brady bill, led by the fight of Jim Brady, and also passed the assault weapons ban. Al Gore cast the deciding tie-breaking vote in the U.S. Senate on the U.S. Senate version of the juvenile justice bill last May, allowing it to proceed with several critically needed gun control measures.

Al Gore is running on a platform that would require photo licensing and safety training for all handgun purchasers.

I might just say, parenthetically, I served in the U.S. Marine Corps. And before the Marines let me touch a weapon, I had to have lots of safety training and learn how to deal with a weapon before they would let me near one.

Al Gore is also calling for closing the loophole with respect to purchases at gun shows, without background checks. And he would reinstitute the waiting period for handgun purchases.

I served with Al Gore in the U.S. Congress. And although Al was once a relatively conservative southern congressman who didn't always vote the right way, in my judgment, on gun issues, he has come to champion the sensible gun safety legislation that, as I say, 80 percent of the American people indicate in every survey that I've seen they want and support.

Governor Bush, on the other hand, may be the National Rifle Association's favorite candidate in years. And we didn't need to see last week's megabucks fund-raiser to figure that out. Although the huge sums of money that the gun lobby is contributing to support him underscores the support they have for Governor Bush. Governor Bush made Texas a state where it is easy to get a concealed carry permit for the first time in over a century.

BARNES: But the NRA wasn't satisfied with that victory that he helped them achieve in Texas, so he signed an extension of that law, allowing Texans to carry guns to churches, synagogues, hospitals and even amusement parks. He claimed to support a bill closing the gun show loophole in his state at the last minute, a state, mind you, with more gun shows than any other, but he let that bill die without any attempt to give overt support to it.

Of course, the governor has also learned his NRA messages, and he can talk the talk about enforcement with the best of them. What's interesting, of course, are those 700 well-trained, well-armed felons who applied for concealed carry permits in Texas but were turned down after they took a handgun safety course with their own weapons because of their prior convictions. As Nina Butts will explain, not one of those Texas felons was prosecuted, although that does not seem to get in the way of Governor Bush's alleged believe in enforcement.

We at Handgun Control are going to spend the next six months taking Al Gore's and George W. Bush's records to the American people. We're going to remind every American voter what a clear-cut choice this is on gun safety for our children and our communities. We're going to take to the ground in grassroots organizing that will be jump-started by next week's Million Mom March, which will now take place in 63 cities across America, here in Washington, D.C., and 62 other cities on Mother's Day. And we're going to establish a permanent network of activists who will work passionately on behalf of candidates of whatever party, whether it's Jim's Republican Party or my Democratic Party, who support common-sense gun safety laws.

We're going to take to the air with issue advocacy ads like the one that our political director, Joe Sudbay, is going to show you in just a couple of minutes. And we're going to ensure that every candidate in the NRA's pocket feels the pain--if we can use that expression--of his or her association with an extremist special interest that is holding America hostage and has been doing so for too long.

Now, Nina Butts is an expert on the subject of George W. Bush and guns. Nina is the executive director of Texans Against Gun Violence and she has come here all the way from Austin, Texas, to offer a concerned Texan's perspective on the Bush record.

I'll turn the podium over to her now so she can give you more specifics on Governor Bush's record, and I and the others will be available, obviously, afterwards for any questions you have.

Nina?

NINA BUTTS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TEXANS AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE: Thanks so much. I appreciate it.

Good morning. My name is Nina Butts, and I am a lobbyist for Gun Control in Texas. I've worked in the capital in Texas since 1995.

In 1994, George Bush ran for governor of Texas against Ann Richards on a campaign promise to sign the concealed handgun bill if he were elected governor. In May of 1995, Governor Bush signed the Texas concealed handgun bill into law, giving ordinary Texas citizens the right to carry loaded handguns in public.

This new law overturned a 125-year-old ban in the state of Texas against carrying a handgun out in public. In fact, the ban against ordinary citizens carrying handguns in public is one of the most basic common-sense gun controls we have in this country.

The Texas Police Chiefs Association opposed our concealed handgun bill. The Texas PTA opposed our concealed handgun bill. A Mason-Dixon poll conducted in January of '95 showed 62 percent of Texans opposed to the concealed handgun bill; only 31 percent in favor of it. Yet, Governor Bush signed it into law May '95.

The supporters of the Texas concealed handgun law attempted to loosen the law in 1997. The original law forbade concealed handguns in churches, hospitals, nursing homes and amusement parks. But in 1997, Governor Bush signed an amendment to our concealed handgun law allowing concealed handguns in churches, nursing homes, hospitals and amusement parks. Ministers from around the state, hospital personnel from around the state, opposed this loosening of the law without success.

In 1999, the police chiefs of the five largest cities in Texas--Austin, Houston, San Antonio, Dallas and Fort Worth--specifically asked the Texas legislature to close the gun show loophole and require criminal background checks at gun shows. Governor Bush utterly ignored the Texas gun show bill and the Texas gun show bill was defeated in a House committee on the very night of the Columbine shootings.

BUTTS: The day after Columbine, Governor Bush said that he, quote, "Supports," end quote, criminal background checks at Texas gun shows, yet Governor Bush did absolutely nothing to enact these checks.

Last year, the National Rifle Association launched an effort in state legislatures to preclude cities' lawsuits against the gun industry. The NRA-backed lawsuit preemption bill in Texas was signed into law by Governor Bush in June of 1999.

We hear Governor Bush, both at home and Texas and also on the campaign trail as a presidential candidate, talking a lot about prosecution and enforcement of gun laws that are already on the books. But unfortunately, this rhetoric does not match his record in Texas.

We have a law in Texas, signed by Governor Bush in 1995 against, making a loaded firearm accessible to a child. It's a good law; it's a crucial law. I have been able to find through open records act requests only one conviction under this law. One conviction. This law--the prosecution of this law has not been tracked by Governor Bush's office or encouraged in any way by Governor Bush's administration.

Also through open records act requests that I have made to the Texas Department of Public Safety, I have discovered 771 convicted felons in Texas who applied for concealed handgun licenses and were denied licenses on the basis of their being felons. These dangerous people were not prosecuted under the leadership of the Bush administration for illegally being in possession of handguns; they had to possess handguns in order to complete their applications for Texas concealed handgun licenses.

It's been very interesting as the gun control lobbyist in the state of Texas to work with the Bush administration and to watch the Bush administration in action. It's been very clear to me that the NRA has been inside the governor's office, and my conclusion is that Governor George Bush is a side-arm of the NRA in the state of Texas.

I'd like to introduce now Joe Sudbay, who is political director of Handgun Control.

SUDBAY: Nina Butts has explained what the gun record of George Bush has been in Texas as governor. It's easy to ask where did these--some of these legislative initiatives that he's so found of come from. Well, they came directly from the National Rifle Association.

Governor Bush has had three legislative sessions in Texas. In each, he has provided the NRA with exactly what they wanted.

In 1995, as you heard, the NRA wanted a carry and conceal weapons law. Governor Bush not only campaigned on the issue, he signed the law on May 26, 1995. And at the time, he was surrounded by NRA leaders, including their former top lobbyist, Connie Matoxa (ph).

The NRA has long considered--carry and conceal weapons laws a top priority for state legislatures.

SUDBAY: The pattern with the NRA is to get those concealed weapons laws passed and in effect, and then come back and weaken them. As Nina explained, that's exactly what happened in the 1997 session of the Texas legislature. The Texas legislature meets every two years. In 1997, the NRA wanted a weaker concealed handgun law, so the governor provided it to them.

Then in 1999, the NRA came up with a new legislative priority preempting city lawsuits. In fact, the NRA's new chief lobbyist, James J. Baker, was quoted in The Washington Post last February, claiming full credit for the lawsuit preemption legislation.

The Post reported that, quote, "The NRA is working only in states where there is a likelihood the governor would sign the legislation." Baker actually said, and I quote, "We're not trying to waste our time or the legislature's time if the governor's not going to sign it." Obviously, once again, the governor of Texas delivered for the NRA by signing the city lawsuit preemption bill on June 18, 1999. At the time, there were no city lawsuits in Texas nor were any planned; that didn't seem to matter.

By just watching out the governor of Texas responded to the NRA's legislative initiative, it's pretty clear that he must have a strong bond with the gun lobby. And, in fact, in their own words, the NRA has made clear just how strong that relationship is.

In an October 1999 fund-raising letter, they sang the praises of Governor Bush. According to the letter, which was signed by Wayne LaPierre, Governor Bush, quote, "... believes that America's first line of defense is to uphold the Second Amendment rights of those who own guns responsibly." They remind readers that, quote, "George Bush signed the law which enables law-abiding Texas citizens to obtain carry-conceal permits, and he signed Texas legislation which bans frivolous lawsuits against gun manufacturers," end quote.

And they also issue a warning, and I quote, "Unless you want to a president and a Congress who will be committed to the destruction of your Second Amendment rights for the next four to eight years, you need to be involved in this campaign."

Well, last February, February 2000, the NRA leadership had a meeting in California. There were a number of speakers and today we're going to let you hear from one of them. We want to focus on the words of NRA first vice president Kayne Robinson, who is also the chair of the Republican Party in Iowa, he sums up just how close the relationship is between the NRA and Governor Bush.

(VIDEO CLIP)

SUDBAY: I think those words speak for themselves.

SUDBAY: Now I'd like to present our final speaker, a man who knows a little bit about the power of words, Jim Brady.

BRADY: Governor Bush has repeatedly told people to look at his record. In my old business, dealing with the news media, if you spoke those words, you'd better mean them. Well, I want to make sure people look at Bush's record on firearms. This is a record that only the gun lobby could love, but for most Americans it's pretty scary.

Over the years, we've also learned that sometimes it helps to listen to what the NRA has to say.

Every now and then, believe it or not, someone over there says something that gives real insight into the gun lobby. The meeting the NRA had in February gives real insight into what they think about George Bush, and we think the American people will find that to be very important.

That's why today Handgun Control is launching a television ad that talks about the Bush record, with some help from his friends at the NRA. In addition, we're launching a new web page which gives additional information on the governor's record on guns, www.bushandguns.com. I urge everyone who cares about the safety of their kids to take a good look at both this ad and the web page.

I also have the job of introducing the first issue ad that Handgun Control has produced this year. Ladies and gentlemen, I present Handgun Control's new issue ad.

(VIDEO CLIP)

QUESTION: Can you tell us a little bit more about the ads? when they'll be running, where, how long?

BARNES: The initial buy is in cities across the country and states that we're targeting. We're not going to be making public the specific buy. We don't need the other side to know exactly where we're going. But it is a significant national media buy that we're making...

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION: What states?

BARNES: ... with respect to this ad.

States that we believe are particularly important...

(CROSSTALK)

QUESTION: What are they?

BARNES: We're not going to be making public the list of where we're buying.

QUESTION: Beginning when?

BARNES: Today.

QUESTION: Today?

BARNES: It's also on our web site as of 10:00 this morning at handguncontrol.org.

QUESTION: How much are you going to spend on the media buy?

BARNES: The initial buy is in the hundreds of thousands and we will be spending more as we go forward as we make a judgment as to where to do it.

QUESTION: How long are they...

BARNES: The initial buy is for a week. One week? The initial buy is for one week.

QUESTION: I want to go back to this tape that you played before the ad. What is wrong with organizations feeling like they have a candidate who totally supports their point of view? I mean, what's wrong with what he said?

BARNES: There's nothing wrong with any organization supporting a candidate who share its views. What we want to be certain of is that before anyone makes a decision about who they want to support for elected office, they know what that person's position is on the issue that we believe is so important to the safety of our communities and our children, and that is the gun issue, the gun safety issue.

So this ad and many other actions that we'll be taking between now--will be taking over the next several months will be designed to make sure that the American people know the records of the candidates.

I'm confident that the National Rifle Association and the gun lobby will be doing comparable kinds of things and getting the record out to people that they think will be supportive of their position, and that's perfectly appropriate in a democracy.

But we want to be certain that the American people--who we're confident share our concern about the continued slaughter and mayhem in our country where 12 children die every day--that they know what the records of these candidates are, not only for president but for U.S. Senate, the U.S. Congress, state legislators. And we'll be doing informational activities with respect to all of these races across the country.

QUESTION: If I can have a follow-up to that, is there some implication--are you all implying that this is some sort of illicit relationship between George Bush and the NRA? Or is that simply a political overstatement? I mean, you know...

BARNES: You use the term "illicit." We didn't use the term "illicit" in our ad.

QUESTION: I know you didn't, but what I'm asking...

(CROSSTALK)

BARNES: What we're stating is that there is clearly an extremely unusually close relationship between Governor Bush and the National Rifle Association. The National Rifle Association says that that is true. The NRA says that they have--I forget the exact words from this statement, but you've got it. You know what they say the nature of the relationship is: extremely close. And we want to be sure that the American people know what the records are.

And it is very relevant for people, as they make their decision about what candidates to support, to look at organizations and see what kind of relationship they have.

People will be noting the relationships of organizations that support Vice President Gore. We think it's relevant to the decision-making of people who are concerned about gun safety that they know that the governor of Texas has a record of working extremely closely with the gun lobby in the state of Texas.

And Nina, I think, has additional comment on it.

BUTTS: Governor Bush has been a dream come true for the NRA in Texas. He has carried their ball, he has carried their water. If the NRA wanted a law passed in Texas, Governor Bush made sure that it happened from the very beginning forward. It has been very clear to me that the direction, the leadership, has come from Governor Bush's office to pass our concealed handgun law and our lawsuit preemption bill.

I'm not talking about anything illegal or illicit. I'm simply talking about someone who's running for president now who has been a dream come true for the gun lobby in his home state.

QUESTION: You focused on that later you will be looking at other state-level--state votes later on this year during the campaign. If you describe Governor Bush as a dream come true, how many other governors are similarly aligned or these kinds of close relationships with the NRA?

BARNES: You want take it, Joe?

SUDBAY: It varies across the country in terms of what's happened with governors, specifically on the gun issue. A lot of governors have changed their records, actually.

And on the issue of concealed weapons, we've seen a lot of opposition to the concealed weapons legislation from Midwest Republican governors, to be frank.

SUDBAY: Governor Edgar and his successor, George Ryan, in Illinois opposed that law. Governor Graves, the governor of Kansas, actually vetoed a concealed handgun law. Governor Voinovich and his successor, Governor Taft, both oppose the concealed handgun law. Governor Thompson is about to veto the concealed weapons law; he told Jim that in March of '95. It's never moved.

We saw a few months ago Governor Pataki offer a very good package on gun control. Governor Owens is actively supporting a referendum in Colorado that would close the gun show loophole. So there's been a very changing--there's a changing dynamic amongst governors out in the country.

QUESTION: Joe, to follow up on that. How would you rank Governor Bush though? I mean, is he particularly--and I think that's is the part of the question--is he particularly close to the NRA, more than most governors? Or...

SUDBAY: I'd say he's in the category of governors who have been extremely supportive of the NRA. And I think Jim Baker--what James J. Baker said in The Post last year, that they were only going to go into states where they knew they had governors on their side is perhaps the most telling thing. He's someone they know they can count on when they want legislation passed.

And that's what we want to make sure people understand about that record.

QUESTION: Joe, nobody's making a decision on the presidential candidate right now. It seems awfully early. What's the point of the buy for this week of...

SUDBAY: Well, Matt, I think right now it's a time when we think it's important that people understand what the records of elected officials are in the country.

And there are a lot of people who are thinking about the gun issue right now. There's been a rash of shootings. We just passed the Columbine anniversary, which a lot of people focused on the gun issue. And next week, as Mike mentioned earlier, in 63 cities across America, mothers are going to be marching against gun violence.

So there's a lot of attention being paid to the issue right now, and we think it's a good time to talk about the records of elected officials.

QUESTION: To follow up on that, will you continue to be active between now and November, straight through...

SUDBAY: Well, right now we're talking about records. Handgun Control has a voter education fund, which will at some point be making decisions about supporting candidates in races across the country, but that's for later.

QUESTION: So this is just an independent kind of...

SUDBAY: This is an issue advocacy done by Handgun Control which is a 501(c)(4).

QUESTION: Have you had a response from the Bush campaign about your decision to run the ads?

SUDBAY: We haven't had any communication with them.

BARNES: We haven't communicated with them at all about it.

QUESTION: You may have already answered this, since I came in late. But how did you obtain the tape of inside the NRA meeting?

BARNES: We bought it. It's for sale--the NRA is selling this tape.

SUDBAY: www.nrawinningteam.com has an analysis of a meeting in California in February, and they offered the tape for sale.

QUESTION: How much was it?

SUDBAY: I don't remember.

BARNES: \$20.

QUESTION: They used to give out those statistics you should cite, that Al Gore's become the champion of sensible gun safety legislation and 80 percent of the American people want support.

What is your source for that? And what kind of gun legislation are you talking about?

BARNES: Well, national polls have indicated that 80 percent of the American people support, for example, licensing. The majority of gun owners in America support licensing. So that would be one source. There's overwhelming support for virtually all of the currently pending--well, for all of the currently pending gun legislation, gun safety legislation.

QUESTION: Well, it depends how you ask the question. We could argue this all day, but one of the things the gun groups will say is, of course we support safer guns. We want--we don't want people to be killed, either.

And their response is that, as you know, the enforcement part is--you know, we already have laws; enforce them. How do you respond to that?

SUDBAY: Well, we have responded to that in great detail. And if you'd like our document about the NRA and the myth of their enforcement argument, we'll provide it...

BARNES: There are some on the table.

SUDBAY: ... we'll provide it to you. I could give you, you know, a long answer to that, but it's total nonsense. The NRA has fought to--has fought against enforcement of the laws, has been--unfortunately, the gun lobby's been successful in getting many loopholes into the laws that permit criminals to have very easy access to weapons in this country.

What we're trying to do is close those loopholes that exist in existing law. One of the obvious loopholes is the gun show loophole, which is--that legislation has been sitting in a conference committee on Capitol Hill.

SUDBAY: They haven't had a meeting since last August. Senator Hatch has refused to call a meeting to even discuss whether to close that loophole in the law. I don't see the National Rifle Association arguing that that loophole, which makes it very easy for criminals to go to a gun show and without any background check purchase, you know, fighting weapons. Everybody was frightened by the weapons used down in Miami by police officers. That same kind of weapon is available to criminals in America because the NRA and the gun lobby makes it possible for people to purchase very frightening weapons in America.

BARNES: Can I just add one more thing? Also, we support enforcement. There's not a choice between enforcement or stricter gun laws; the American people want both. The NRA provides a false choice on that. And as a matter of fact, we've been very strong advocates for enforcement policies.

Jim Brady was actually in Denver on March 6 supporting Colorado's Project Exile with U.S. Attorney Tom Strickland and Wayne LaPierre was on the stage doing the same thing, so we are long time advocates. We believe that you need enforcement and prevention.

SUDBAY: Just another point on enforcement. We strongly support the president's proposal for hiring more federal officers to enforce the gun laws in America. And we are still waiting for the National Rifle Association, which says it's so strongly in favor of enforcement, to step up and say that it supports having more enforcement capability in this country to enforce the gun laws.

Yes?

QUESTION: Polls have shown for a long time that a majority of the public want stronger gun laws, and yet in election after election we've seen that if the other side that has the intensity and the ability to bring out their people and that a lot of voters may agree with you don't necessarily vote on this issue. Is there something about this year and this election that would make a difference, particularly in a presidential race, where most of the voters tend to vote on broad thematic issues--their opinions of views of the candidate rather than a single issue?

SUDBAY: There is something different about this election. The pollsters tell us that there is an intensity on our side now that has not existed in the past. And it is in part a response to the constant tragedies that we all see in our society--the Jonesboro and the Columbine and the little girl in Michigan and the lunatic in Baltimore and this guy last week in Pennsylvania and the National Zoo. And we all are, you know, we are all confronted with this constantly, 90 people a day being killed in this country, 12 children a day being killed. And the American people are finally fed up.

And the pollsters tell us that, in fact, people are ready to vote on this issue on our side with an intensity that has not existed--you're right, your question is absolutely well-founded. In the past, people who supported us felt strongly about a lot of issues and this was just one of them. But this year, we are told by the experts, that it's different this year.

QUESTION: But can you get those people who agree with the polls or say who are 80 percent for it, can you get them to go to candidates offices in the same way the NRA does on a consistent day-by-day basis and say, here's what we want.

SUDBAY: Well, I think we're seeing a whole different dynamic in America today. This march that's going to take place next Sunday, on Mother's Day on the 14th, is a reflection of the genuine anger at the grassroots level of our country about the slaughter that continues, day after day after day. This march was the idea of moms; this was not something dreamed up in a PR office in Washington or New York or LA. This was something that has sprung up from the people who've just said, we've had enough, enough of our kids getting killed. And we're seeing now 63 cities. The initial plan was to have a march in Washington, well, people all over the country said, we want to march, we're mad too. And it's going to happen. And this is a phenomenon that didn't exist in the past.

One last one, here.

QUESTION: You had mentioned moments ago the governor again--Governor Ryan in Illinois--governors that are on the opposite side of enforcement. If we could just use a state like that as a focus, you have there all of the Republican leadership, even some of the most conservative Republicans, that Senator--that Hastert and Hyde, Governor Ryan--supportive of many of things that you're talking about. How do you think then the gun issue will play in the presidential race in a state like that, when you have the Republican leadership on the opposite side of the...

SUDBAY: Well, I think again it's important for the people in the state to understand what the records of the people who are running for elected office are.

And Illinois is a great example of how the gun issue plays out. In 1996 in the Durbin race, he ran against Al Salvie (ph) and it was a very competitive race.

Salvie (ph) was considered a real threat to pick up that seat which had been held by Senator Simon. And guns were a prominent issue in that race. And you can talk to Senator Durbin about it. He'll tell you that part of the reason he won was because of the gun issue.

Now, part of what happened was, Al Salvie (ph) got some information from the gun lobby that said Jim Brady used to sell machine guns.

BRADY: Manufacture...
(CROSSTALK)

SUDBAY: Manufactured and sold, that's right.

(LAUGHTER)

And it certainly heightened the awareness of the issue, and Jim responded appropriately, as only Jim Brady can.

But Durbin will tell you, he won because of guns.

And I think it's indicative of the way people feel about guns in that state, that you do see the governor on our side. And during the Senate votes last year, Senator Peter Fitzgerald voted consistently with our position.

So the people of Illinois have made up their minds about the gun issue. We just need to make sure they understand what the records are.

BARNES: Even in Texas, as Nina pointed out, the majority of the people of Texas opposed the actions that their governor took at the behest of the gun lobby.

OK, thank you very much.

PACE: I just wanted to tell you that on this table there will be tapes, both the entire 98-minute tape of that NRA meeting in California. There are beta tapes of the ads.

In addition, we have--if you're print, please take a VHS version, we're a poor organization.

END

Message Sent To: _____

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 22, 2000

CONTACT: Brian Morton 202-289-5792
Joe Sudbay 202-437-4067

THE NRA's "PINOCCHIO" AWARDS: LYING LONGER AND LOUDER

(Washington, D.C.) In two consecutive weeks' worth of appearances on network television public affairs programs, NRA spokespeople have quite possibly set a new standard in the millennium for on-the-record lies, dissemblances, fabrications and distortions.

For the weeks of March 12 and March 19, 2000, National Rifle Association President Charlton Heston and Executive Vice-President Wayne LaPierre made statements that flat-out contradict public record, deliberately misrepresent the past actions of their organization and, in a breathtaking display of hubris, take credit for the most significant gun safety bill to have passed into law in the past 30 years.

In the spirit of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences "Oscar" awards given out this week in Los Angeles for excellence in filmmaking, we would like to present the NRA officers with the "Pinocchio" awards for their skill in hiding the truth:

- In the category of most blatant statements contradictory to the public record, the winner is NRA President Charlton Heston, for his appearance on ABC's "This Week," March 19, 2000:

CHARLTON HESTON: We're in favor of the Brady Bill as it stands now. To a large extent, we drew it up in its current form.

SAM DONALDSON: Mr. Heston, the NRA opposed the Brady Bill.

STEVE ROBERTS: At the time.

HESTON: No, we supported the Brady...

DONALDSON: Once it was passed...

HESTON: We opposed it at the beginning and we were a large factor in the language of the bill.

The truth: When it appeared the Brady bill would become the Brady Law, the NRA dropped the appearances of opposition, and watered it down with amendments such as a "sunset" clause for the waiting period included in the bill, and a provision for an "instant check" which at that time was not feasible and promoted the convenience of the gun buyer over the safety of the citizen. As James Brady himself said in a statement to Washington's WTOP Radio, "It's called the Brady Law, not the Heston Law."

(more)

- For Best Performance by a Lobbyist in contradiction of his own organization's stated policies: NRA VP Wayne La Pierre, on mandatory trigger lock sales, on NBC's "Meet The Press," March 19,

2000:

TIM RUSSERT: Do you support -- on your Internet it says trigger lock legislation is an invasion of privacy. It says you're against it.

LAPIERRE: No, we have always supported safety locks. We're supporting the bill on Capitol Hill right now that provides mandatory ...

RUSSERT: In states throughout the country?

LAPIERRE: Mandatory safety locks with the sale of every gun, instant checks on gun shows done with a 24-hour delay, and violent juveniles prohibited from owning guns.

The truth: In a letter to Sarah Brady, dated June 15, 1998 (available to be faxed to reporters), Charlton Heston wrote:

Dear Mrs. Brady,

I appreciate your warm letter, but I fear I've not yet earned your applause. When I expressed approval of trigger locks for gun safety, I by no means included support for a federal mandate requiring their use...

Cordially, (signed) Charlton Heston

- In the category of Best Impersonation of an Administration Official touting an Administration program, Wayne LaPierre, once again on "Meet The Press," 3/19/00, claiming credit for the Project Exile program, initiated by U.S. Attorney for the state of Virginia and Clinton Administration appointee Helen Fahey and other U.S. Attorneys across the country:

LAPIERRE: "I know they brag about [prosecutions] being up 16 percent. That entire increase is in the NRA Exile cities of Richmond, Virginia, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Birmingham and Rochester, New York. I'm the guy that's trying to make people safe."

- In the category of Best Performance in A Fable or Fairy Tale, once again, the NRA's Wayne LaPierre, on NBC's "Meet The Press," 3/19/00, contradicting reality in his claim that President Clinton shares blame for the shooting death of Northwestern basketball coach Ricky Byrdsong:

LAPIERRE: Tim, but here's the fact. The man, Ben Smith (ph), walked into a gun store, committed a brand-new federal crime right under the federal governments nose. It's up to 10 years in prison, it's a felony.

They were notified right away. Even though Illinois has co-responsibility, the Feds were notified right away. They did nothing to the felon except let him walk out the door. Three days later he bought a gun on the illegal market and then he did the killing. If they had prosecuted under the existing federal law, that killing wouldn't have happened. Those 179,000 people that the president says he's stopped, what he doesn't tell people is they're all walking the street tonight.

(more)

TIM RUSSERT: Who prosecutes Brady violations in the state of Illinois?

The Feds or the state?

LAPIERRE: They both have co-authority, and the Feds ought to prosecute.

The truth: Illinois does not use the federal NICS system to process a background check – all gun checks are done at the state level. Federal firearms officials were notified *six days later* of Benjamin Nathaniel Smith's attempt to purchase a firearm.

As Mr. LaPierre's statement about letting Smith "walk out the door," for the federal authorities to even make an arrest at the point of sale would require close to *103,000* more ATF agents, just to be stationed on the premises of each federally licensed firearms dealer – something the NRA would *never* support, proving LaPierre's argument to be sheer demagoguery.

In addition, the week before, LaPierre said on ABC's "World News Tonight,":

"The key question here for the president, has he looked into the eyes of Ricky Byrdsong's family. Ricky Byrdsong, a former basketball coach for Northwestern who was killed, because blood is on his hands. That death is on the president's hands. If he prosecuted, he would have prevented the death."

The widow of Ricky Byrdsong released a statement to the media, saying in part:

"I am shocked and appalled by the statement and consider the accusation against our president to be unjust."

When confronted by Mrs. Byrdsong's statement, LaPierre's comment was: "... and that doesn't surprise me."

Coming from Wayne LaPierre, scurrilous statements with no basis in fact are no surprise to anyone else, either.

And finally, for the sheer number of whoppers told in one broadcast, National Rifle Association Executive Vice-President Wayne LaPierre completes a near-sweep of long-nosed trophies for his appearance on ABC's "This Week," March 12, 2000:

- *"The NRA created the Instant-Check system."* As President Clinton pointed out, the NRA fought the Brady Bill – the proposal that eliminated prohibited purchases by background check and waiting period – for seven long years. Only after President Clinton's election, and with the support of his Administration, did passage of the Brady Law become a political possibility. And only then did the NRA offer an "instant-check" system as a substitute for the locally-administered background check and waiting period proposed by Brady. With the usual political haggling and threats from the gun lobby, the compounding of ingredients by a Congress longing for a compromise gave us the original Brady proposal for five years, which was replaced by the Instant-Check system on November 30, 1998. Thirty-four states now have no waiting period for new handgun purchases, putting public safety at risk from impulse homicides and suicides.
(more)
- *The NRA: the brave protector of innocent children.* Wayne LaPierre claims that his organization

supports holding gun-owners responsible for leaving guns accessible to children. There's a name for that: it's called a Child Access Protection law, which in 17 states has lowered the number of accidental deaths of children from firearms by an average of 23%. This is the law currently being proposed in Ohio, where the NRA just this week labeled it "the [Governor] Taft Burglar Protection Bill" and urged its members to "oppose any bill which attempts to dictate how law-abiding citizens should store their firearms." Last week, in its member blast-fax, the NRA congratulated pro-gun legislators in Georgia for opposing a CAP bill which "would have made you a criminal if a child were to gain unauthorized access to your firearms." As the NRA webpage noted on Friday, in Georgia, Michigan and South Carolina they opposed bills which would make it easier to prosecute and convict irresponsible gunowners whose guns are used by children to kill or injure others.

And oh, by the way, you'll have to look long and hard for the NRA's supposed "support" for the mandatory sale of trigger locks. They have consistently opposed this admittedly modest measure at both the Federal and state level since it was first proposed, more than five years ago.

- *Let's just lock up those gun-toting criminals and throw away the key*, or words to that effect. Like in Illinois, where the NRA is again fighting a state law which would make illegal firearms possession a felony instead of a misdemeanor. Or Utah, where the gun lobby fights a legislative attempt to 'deprive' violent misdemeanants of their ability to purchase a firearm. Or Florida, where the NRA filed an amicus brief supporting the right of a gang member standing on a corner NOT to be searched for the illegal weapon he was carrying. Or in the United States Congress, where every year the NRA searches for funding for the ATF to research and restore the 'gun rights' of convicted felons who want their weapons back.

The Charlton Heston who now challenges President Clinton to a debate about "enforcement" is the same Charlton Heston who last week found himself too busy to share a platform with Jim Brady supporting Project Exile in Colorado. Why? Because the entire enforcement issue is a false choice: we can prosecute and convict gun-toting criminals *and* do everything possible to prevent them from getting guns in the first place. The NRA's enforcement red herring certainly smells fishy these days.

- *The NRA really wanted to pass that gun-control package bottled up in Congress.* News to us. Handgun Control lobbyists saw more of NRA chief lobbyist James Jay Baker on the Hill last spring than they did their own mothers, and it never occurred to us that we were all after the same thing. Let's not rewrite history: Senator (and NRA Board Member) Larry Craig first got an amendment passed that actually broadened the gun-show loophole, and the NRA pulled in every chit to defeat the subsequently successful Lautenberg amendment, which closed it. The issue of taking 24 hours vs. 72 to check out gun-show purchasers whose records show a problem is not a meaningless debate.
- The way the NRA wants it, after 24 hours (on a weekend, most likely), if the instant-check cannot PROVE that the purchaser is prohibited, he happily gets his gun and goes on his way. This is not about waiting periods; this is about the five percent of purchasers whose records show problems and for whom research is needed. The NRA sure loves that five percent, enough to ensure that, as the NRA put it in its year-end report, "NRA's grassroots army prevailed upon the House of

Representatives. While the Senate passed a version of Juvenile Justice Reform legislation (S. 254) containing the Lautenberg amendment, the House of Representatives stood fast and blocked similar legislation.”

- *Suburban women are safe from guns...despite what Clinton/Gore say.* The NRA’s newfound interest in suburban women stems from its understanding that suburban women are the swing voting bloc for the 2000 elections. In Missouri last year, it was suburban voters who defeated the NRA’s proposal to let virtually anyone carry a hidden handgun in the state. Just last week, suburban voters in California defeated a pro-gun Democrat, replacing him with Hilda Solis, who has led the gun-control charge in the California legislature.

Suburban women haven’t forgotten that every school shooting, except in Michigan, occurred in suburban schools, at the hands of suburban kids with guns. But according to Wayne LaPierre, because one school shooting was committed by a child who lived in a crackhouse, now ALL the problems of youth violence are “inner city” and “drug-related.” It’s just those inner-city drug-dealers who are putting suburban women at risk....classic NRA rhetoric to try to divide and conquer, and to persuade average Americans that gun violence couldn’t possibly touch their lives. But after watching kids shoot and kill other kids, all Americans have been touched by gun violence. The NRA’s greatest fear is that the American people, especially the swing voters, will make support for stricter gun laws a voting issue. This November, the NRA’s greatest fear will be realized.

The NRA obviously believes that most Americans, including the national press, can be easily duped. But all the message-training that money can buy will not make people forget that the NRA is, in the words of that lefty liberal publication *Fortune Magazine*, “a pariah even among some of its friends.” Shame on the NRA for its latest attack ads, shame on them for their hypocrisy, and shame on them for believing Americans to be stupid enough to believe the big lies.

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Handgun Control, chaired by Sarah Brady, is the nation’s largest citizens’ gun control lobbying organization. Based in Washington, DC, HCI works to enact stronger federal, state and local gun control laws, but does not seek to ban handguns. Founded in 1974, HCI has more than 400,000 members nationwide and works with local groups around the country to enact and protect reasonable gun control laws. More information about HCI and its affiliated organization, the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence, can be found on our website at www.handguncontrol.org.

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HEADLINE: NRA PRESIDENT WAYNE LAPIERRE AND WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY JOE LOCKHART DISCUSS GUN CONTROL IN THE UNITED STATES

BODY:

MR. RUSSERT:

But, first, guns in America, the NRA versus the president. Wayne LaPierre, of the NRA, let me start with you. You created quite a firestorm last week with this comment. Let me put it on the screen for you and our viewers. "I've come to believe he"--President Clinton--"needs a certain level of violence in this country. He's willing to accept a certain level of killing to further his political agenda. And the vice president, too." Do you, a week later, still believe the president and the vice president use killing for political purposes?

MR. LaPIERRE: Tim, this is what I believe, and I know I used some strong language, but I did it to center the issue on the fact that this administration, over the last seven years, has dropped federal enforcement of the existing federal gun laws against the bad guys by 50 percent, and that's why I used the language, to center the debate.

And, yeah, the whole Clinton spin machine geared up. The national media kind of made a spectacle of it, and there were a lot of cartoons in the paper, but you know something, on Thursday night of last week at 10:30, Sheriff Deputy Kinshen was killed down in Georgia by H. Rap Brown, who did the killing, a violent federal felon, who they had in '95 breaking all the existing federal gun laws.

The local authorities contacted the Clinton administration and asked him to prosecute it, and because of their policy of not aggressively enforcing the federal gun laws, last Thursday night, while I was being ridiculed for my statement, that Fulton County sheriff's deputy died by H. Rap Brown, along with Mr. Englis, the other deputy, who was shot, when that man should have been in a federal prison for up to 10 years.

MR. RUSSERT: Words are important. I want to go back. Will you stand and sit here today and say that Bill Clinton and Al Gore are willing to accept killings to further their political agenda? Just those words.

MR. LaPIERRE: Here's what I think...

MR. RUSSERT: Yes or no.

MR. LaPIERRE: If you have the ability...

MR. RUSSERT: Will they...

MR. LaPIERRE: ...to do something about it and you don't, you're accepting it. Here's what they're doing. We have federal gun laws, Tim, right now against violent felons with drugs--with guns, drug dealers with guns, gangs with guns. Bill Clinton has the big stick. He can pick them up right now under existing federal law, hold them without bail, send them to the federal pen for up to five to 10 years. They're not doing that. They let them roam the street and they let them go to their next killing, when they could take them off the street right now and that next killing would never occur.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. LaPierre, the world's watching.

MR. LaPIERRE: I've said...

MR. RUSSERT: An American citizen, the head of the NRA, is saying that the president and vice president of the United States tolerate killing for political reasons. Is that what you're saying?

MR. LaPIERRE: All I'm saying is...

MR. RUSSERT: Is that what you're saying?

MR. LaPIERRE: ...I need a good answer from them as to why they won't prosecute. If we could take...

MR. RUSSERT: But are you saying they tolerate killing for political purposes?

MR. LaPIERRE: Tim, the effect of their policy, by not taking the drug dealer with the gun, the violent felon with a gun and the gang member with a gun off the street is somebody later gets killed. If they would pick them up under the existing federal law that they have right now on the books and throw them in the federal penitentiary, they would save lives. We did it in Richmond, Virginia. You know what happened? We cut the murder rate in Richmond, Virginia, by 50 percent. That's the only program that's done that anywhere.

MR. RUSSERT: You will not apologize for your comment?

MR. LaPIERRE: No.

MR. RUSSERT: You will not retract it?

MR. LaPIERRE: It's the Clinton policy that needs to be changed. And they need to change their policy. I know they brag about being up 16 percent. That entire increase is in the NRA exile cities of Richmond, Virginia; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Birmingham; and Rochester, New York. I'm the guy that's trying to make people safe. I want these guys to enforce the existing law and get the drug dealers with guns, the gangs with guns and the violent felons out of neighborhoods all over this country.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me show you something else you said last week. And that is on the screen here. Looking--"The key question here for the president as he looked into the eyes of Ricky Byrdsong's family"--Ricky Byrdsong, a former basketball coach for Northwestern who was killed--"because blood is on his

hands. That death is on the president's hands. If he prosecuted, he would have prevented the death."

We reached out to Mrs. Byrdsong, and she has issued the following statement, and I'll put that on the screen for you. "I am shocked and appalled by the statement and consider the accusation against our president to be unjust."

MR. LaPIERRE: That doesn't surprise me, Tim, but the facts are the fact. This man walked...

MR. RUSSERT: Well, wait, wait, wait. You said the president should look her in the eyes.

MR. LaPIERRE: Right.

MR. RUSSERT: He called her repeatedly after the crime and she says that your accusation's unjust.

MR. LaPIERRE: Tim, but here's the facts. The man, Ben Smith, walked into a gun store, committed a brand-new federal crime right under the federal government's nose. It's up to 10 years in prison. It's a felony. They were notified right away, even though Illinois has co-responsibility. The feds were notified right away. They did nothing to the felon, except let him walk out the door. Three days later, he bought a gun on the illegal market and then he did the killing. If they had prosecuted under the existing federal law, that killing wouldn't have happened. Those 179,000 people that the president says he stopped--what he doesn't tell people is they're all walking the street tonight.

MR. RUSSERT: Who prosecutes Brady violations in the state of Illinois? The feds or the state?

MR. LaPIERRE: They both have co-authority, and the feds ought to prosecute. It's against the federal law for a felon to buy a gun. It's right...

MR. RUSSERT: But in Illinois, the state prosecutes?

MR. LaPIERRE: No, it's right on the federal form that it's a 10-year federal felony if they don't prosecute it. And the networks are getting that wrong. They're all reporting it's a state responsibility. That's fine, but it's also a violation of federal law.

MR. RUSSERT: So just to make clear, as we sit here on this Sunday, March 19th, you believe the president uses killing for political purposes and has blood on his hands?

MR. LaPIERRE: Tim, all I know is he could save lives, and the chairman...

MR. RUSSERT: But why can't you just say yes...

MR. LaPIERRE: ...of the Democratic...

MR. RUSSERT: ...that's what you believe?

MR. LaPIERRE: ...National Committee said that if they would put the program Wayne and the NRA are trying to get around the country, it would save lives.

MR. RUSSERT: But some people think you're using this hot rhetoric in order to increase your membership and raise money.

MR. LaPIERRE: I'm trying--I'm using this...

MR. RUSSERT: Do you believe it or not? Do you believe it?

MR. LaPIERRE: I'm using this hot rhetoric because I'm trying to get people to focus on the fact these guys in the White House, while they want a lot more gun laws, they refuse to enforce the gun laws on the books against the drug dealers, the gangs and the violent felons, and they're the ones doing the killings.

MR. RUSSERT: So the president tolerates killing...

MR. LaPIERRE: Janet Ren...

MR. RUSSERT: ...and has blood on his hands. Do you believe that?

MR. LaPIERRE: Janet Reno went before the Senate committee, and Senator Hatch said, "Can we expect any improvement in the prosecution numbers?" And she said, "I can't promise you that." When you don't increase the prosecutions, people are dying. That's the NRA's point.

MR. RUSSERT: So your answer is yes?

MR. LaPIERRE: The issue's not rhetoric with the president, Tim. The issue is why that felon, Rap Brown, was on the streets of Atlanta when this administration could have prosecuted him under the existing federal gun laws and why that murder was allowed to happen.

MR. RUSSERT: You stand by your comments?

MR. LaPIERRE: I stand by the fact that they're not enforcing the law.

MR. RUSSERT: You stand by your comments?

MR. LaPIERRE: It's not an issue of Wayne's rhetoric vers...

MR. RUSSERT: Why can't you say yes or no?

MR. LaPIERRE: Because you guys in the media want this to be Wayne's rhetoric versus the White House.

MR. RUSSERT: So?

MR. LaPIERRE: And what it ought to be is on the lack of prosecutions out of this administration.

MR. RUSSERT: We here at MEET THE PRESS want to hold you accountable for your comments. Do you stand by your comments?

MR. LaPIERRE: I stand by my comments that if this administration would enforce the federal law, they'd save lives, and they're not doing it while they

call for a lot more laws.

MR. RUSSERT: Let's go to the White House press secretary, who's traveling with the president in India.

Mr. Lockhart, Mr. LaPierre referred to the case of Yamil Abdul la al Amin, aka H. Rap Brown, who allegedly shot a sheriff's deputy the other night. A police officer in Marietta, Georgia, named Mike Powell, spoke to the NRA in this footage, and let me show it to you.

(Videotape):

MR. MIKE POWELL (Police Officer, Marietta, Georgia): I think Bill Clinton should feel guilty about what's going on in this country. If he would have his agencies enforce the laws on the books today, a lot of this wouldn't happen.

(End videotape)

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Lockhart, prosecutions by the federal government. Let me show you a chart prepared by the Senate Judiciary Committee, which says that in 1998, possession or discharge of firearm on school grounds, only 8; transfer of a handgun, ammunition to a juvenile, only 8 cases; possession of handgun, ammunition, by a j--only 8 cases; Brady Act, background check, violations, federal level, only 1.

Mr. LaPierre has said the Clinton administration is extremely lax in prosecutions of gun crimes. Is that true and why?

MR. LOCKHART: It's not true, Tim. And I think America has had a chance to look at what the NRA is about over the last four or five minutes. Accusing the president of having blood on his hands, of being responsible for a murder, it's really sick rhetoric and it should be repudiated by anyone who hears it. There's been an appalling silence from political leaders over the last week, particularly the Republicans who are the NRA allies, in order to repudiate this.

But let's talk about prosecutions for a second, but let's use the real statistics and let's deal with reality. The vast majority of prosecutions are done at the state level. We've worked with the state and local authorities by increasing money to them by 300 percent since 1993. State prosecutions are up 22 percent over the last six, seven years. Federal prosecutions are up 16 percent, even though they're a smaller number because the states do most of them.

But the most important statistic of all and a statistic you'll never hear Mr. LaPierre talking about is gun crime in this country, since President Clinton took office, is down 35 percent, 35 percent. That is a record that we are proud of, but we also know we need to do more, which is why we put up a program this year to spend \$ 280 million to put 1,000 new gun prosecutors in local courts and to put 500 new ATF agents out on the street investigating gun crimes.

And the most appalling thing of all is the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee released a fund-raising letter saying, "You must send us money because Bill Clinton wants to have more gun control laws with that \$ 280 million." So after making a case that somehow--and a false case--that we're lax on enforcement, the Republicans have now stood up and said that they're against

enforcement. So I think this is all a lot of rhetoric designed to--Who knows to do what? I think probably obscure the record that the NRA and the Republicans are on the wrong side of this issue, but we're going to keep working on it.

MR. RUSSERT: But you saw the graphic prepared by the Senate Judiciary Committee. Why doesn't the federal government and the administration enforce violations of the Brady Act? They just simply don't want to do it, it seems.

MR. LOCKHART: Oh, the Brady Act, first off, was designed to keep guns out of the hands of criminals; 700,000 it has worked with. But the vast, vast majority of those are done at the state level. And we have a program where we work with the state.

Let's talk about the blood-on-your-hands comment for a second. Mr. LaPierre just there looked straight in the camera and tried to deceive the American public by saying that the state somehow contacted the ATF right away. The state of Illinois contacted the ATF some six days after Mr. Byrdsong was tragically killed. That is not something I think the state is working to improve, that record, but the idea that somehow the president and the vice president are responsible for murders, I don't think anyone in this country buys that.

MR. RUSSERT: H. Rap Brown was arrested in 1995 for allegedly shooting someone, the witness recanted, but all charges against him were dropped even though he was carrying an illegal firearm. And policemen now--as you saw, Michael Paul and others, are saying, "H. Rap Brown should have been prosecuted in '95 and he wouldn't have been around to allegedly commit the murder that occurred a few days ago."

MR. LOCKHART: Well, Tim, I don't know the details of this case. This is the first I've heard of this, but my guess is if this follows most of the cases, it's done on the local level, and you ought to talk to the local authorities there on what the details are. But I think the one thing we found with Mr. LaPierre and the NRA is that facts are flexible things and they can be twisted around any way you want. We found out from the Byrdsong case this week that the facts that he used were completely made up, and were really hurtful to the family. I think the statement you put up is important for Mrs. Byrdsong. I think they're willing to do anything, say anything, in order to poison the debate, which is a legitimate debate, about gun safety. But I'll tell you, there is something he said earlier that I agree with.

MR. LaPIERRE: Hey, Joe...

MR. LOCKHART: And I know that might be news to you. What I agree with is this isn't about the White House and the NRA. Our fight's with Congress right now. For nine long months they have sat on a conference report with sensible gun control laws and they won't even meet. The House this week had to repudiate the Republican leadership to instruct the conferees to have a meeting to get this law passed.

And I think if you look at what happened on Friday in Washington with Smith & Wesson settling the lawsuit with the cities and the federal government, you'll find that the floor has collapsed on the argument against gun safety legislation. The largest manufacturer of handguns is saying, "We can do better. We can produce smart guns. Background checks work."

MR. LaPIERRE: Hey, Joe...

MR. LOCKHART: We want to work cooperatively. They have taken and said, "The NRA is on the wrong side of this issue." The White House and the vast majority of Americans are on the right side, and we want to work with them.

MR. LaPIERRE: Joe, I've had people down in Atlanta over the weekend. The local authorities say that they contacted you guys on the prosecution, the Rap Brown case, and you guys had no interest under your policy of not prosecuting to bring that case.

MR. LOCKHART: Well, when...

MR. LaPIERRE: Let me say one other thing. You talk about the state and local systems. Every cop on the street knows they serve a fourth to a fifth of their sentence. They don't have the ability to hold without bail. There's no guarantee of a speedy trial and those state systems are in shambles. You guys have the big club. You can hold them without bail. You can send them to federal prison for 85 percent of their sentence and you don't do it. The people doing the killings, the drug dealers, the gangs, the violent juveniles--you could make America safe.

In Richmond, we cut murder, as I said, by 50 percent in that city with simply enforcing zero tolerance of the federal gun laws against the bad buys. And that's our gripe with you guys at the White House. You won't do it.

MR. RUSSERT: Why not have a policy of zero tolerance?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, Tim, let me jump in here for a second because there's some important points. The project that he so proudly talks about in Richmond, and we should be proud of it, you would believe, if you listen to the ads, that this was the idea of the NRA. This was the idea of a U.S. attorney that President Clinton appointed. And we have done wonderful things around this country in working cooperatively with local and state authorities. That's why the crime rate's down.

MR. LaPIERRE: And...

MR. LOCKHART: And let me finish here. It's important. Let me finish. There is not a police organization in this country that's on the NRA's side.

MR. LaPIERRE: Oh, that's--hey, Joe, we have street cops all over America supporting--yeah, that's right.

MR. LOCKHART: Look at the major police organizations. They support the crime bill. Listen, you can talk about your street cops, but the organizations support...

MR. RUSSERT: All right.

MR. LOCKHART: Well, listen, if you want to go the major police organizations, you ask them whether they believe in the Brady Bill, whether they believe in the crime bill of 1994, whether they believe in what--we're trying to get this done. They're with the president; they're against the NRA.

MR. RUSSERT: All right.

MR. LaPIERRE: See how many of you can get down to the White House to endorse your non-prosecution policy.

MR. RUSSERT: Mr. Lockhart, why not have a zero tolerance, that the federal government will not tolerate the violation of any federal gun law, period?

MR. LOCKHART: Well, we have no tolerance, and we've been working with state and local authorities. That's why prosecutions are up, Tim. That's why crime is down. We go and we have put enormous resources into this. It has been a very tough fight. Frankly, the NRA and the Republican Party have fought us every step of the way on this but violent gun crime is down 35 percent. We have new proposals that'll work even better, but we're not getting any help. And what you have to remember here is not the ads that fill up the air that are paid for by the NRA, it's not the work that's done for them up on Capitol Hill by some Republicans, it's what the bottom line is. The bottom line is it's a safer country...

MR. LaPIERRE: Joe, the bottom line is when--let me tell you the bottom line. When police officers around the country catch a felon with a gun, a drug dealer with a gun, a gang member with a gun, and they call the Department of Justice and they say, "Will you prosecute this case?," 99 out of 100 times, you guys down there at the White House and Justice Department say no. And that's the bottom line. And the street cops know it.

MR. LOCKHART: Well, Tim, I...

MR. RUSSERT: Go ahead, Joe.

MR. LOCKHART: He can talk all he wants about street cops. The major police organizations have all endorsed the president's proposal here and I--you know, listen, he can sit there all day long. We've already found him taking liberties with the facts a number of times, and the president will stand by his record of enforcement. He'll stand by his record of bringing crime down--35 percent cut. We've got this--under this president, violent gun criminals spent two additional years in jail as opposed to under President Bush. We have a very positive record. And, frankly, the most important thing now is that we get away from an argument with the NRA because I think that argument's over. I think Smith & Wesson put that argument to rest on Friday. And we get Congress to do something.

MR. LaPIERRE: What...

MR. LOCKHART: Nine months is too long when 12 kids are killed every day by gun violence. Nine months is too long to not pass legislation, to not even have a meeting of the conference. Congress needs to do that. They also--I think we need to show some leadership here.

MR. RUSSERT: All right, let me...

MR. LOCKHART: There are a number of traditional allies in Congress among the Republican Party that need to stand up and repudiate the kind of rhetoric they've heard over the last week. Tim, you heard it. I think most of America is disgusted by it. And what we found out today is that Mr. LaPierre is not

willing to back down off of it.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me turn to the Smith & Wesson plan that you announced over on Friday, Mr. Lockhart. U.S. gunmakers strike a deal where Smith & Wesson agreed to provide safety locks on all guns that they sell. And on the NRA Web site, Mr. LaPierre, it says Smith & Wesson surrenders. Why would you criticize a gun manufacturer voluntarily selling guns with safety locks?

MR. LaPIERRE: Well, we support safety locks. I think Smith & Wesson is a foreign-owned company. The rumor is that they were simply trying to sell the company and they...

MR. RUSSERT: You support--on your Internet it says trigger lock legislation is an invasion of privacy. You're against it.

MR. LaPIERRE: No, we have always supported safety locks. We're supporting the bill on Capitol Hill right now that provides mandatory...

MR. RUSSERT: In states throughout the country?

MR. LaPIERRE: Mandatory safety locks with the sale of every gun, instant checks on gun shows done with a 24-hour delay, and violent juveniles prohibited from owning guns.

MR. RUSSERT: Well, let me put that on...

MR. LaPIERRE: And these guys killed the bill last year.

MR. RUSSERT: Let me put that on the screen because these are the issues in the Senate bill and the House bill, and put it on our screen. These are the three elements of the legislation that Mr. Lockhart referred to. A Senate bill with 72-hour background checks at all gun shows, child safety locks sold with all handguns, ban importation of high-capacity ammunition clips. Can you accept number two and three?

MR. LaPIERRE: We have always felt that magazine capacity really doesn't have much to do. I mean, you might as well tell a criminal how many guns he can take to a crime to...

MR. RUSSERT: So you can't accept three? Ban...

MR. LaPIERRE: No. But let me tell you, last year, they had a bill they could have had that included that, it included safety locks, it included instant checks on gun shows, and the president killed it. You know what these guys are doing?

MR. RUSSERT: But it comes down to a critical issue. You say 24-hour wait.

MR. LaPIERRE: Right.

MR. RUSSERT: Background check. The administration says 72 hours. They say that 90 percent of people...

MR. LaPIERRE: Right.

MR. RUSSERT: ...who buy guns can get cleared in 24 hours...

MR. LaPIERRE: Right.

MR. RUSSERT: ...but the final 10 percent--and the president said the chances of the final 10 percent being bad guys are about 20 to 1. And they need three days, 72 hours, to check medical records, health records, law enforcement records. Sometimes places are closed on weekends, and that's why the 72 hours is critical. Will you accept the 72 hours?

MR. LaPIERRE: No, we won't. And let me tell you something, these real bad guys that they say they need the extra time on, they're not prosecuting any of them. If they're so bad, why don't they prosecute it? And the other thing they're doing is they're playing a Charlie Brown and the football strategy. The president says the only difference is 72 hours. Mr. Gephardt and Bonior have a letter out up on Capitol Hill right now saying they will accept nothing less than the Lautenberg bill, which shuts down all gun shows completely. It gives the federal government the ability to put a phone book volume of federal red tape on the honest people and a definition of gun shows so broad it could be the living room on your house.

MR. RUSSERT: Will that legislation pass?

MR. LaPIERRE: These guys in the White House are playing politics, and they know it.

MR. RUSSERT: Will that legislation pass with a 72-hour waiting period? Will it pass?

MR. LaPIERRE: I don't think with the 72. I think they could get it right now with a 24. They could get safety locks, checks on all sales at all gun shows.

MR. RUSSERT: Would you take 48 hours?

MR. LaPIERRE: We'll take 24. They need to bend here. The fact is they could have 24. They're not...

MR. RUSSERT: Joe Lockhart, Mr. LaPierre said that legislation would pass, the president could sign it into law if you could accept a 24-hour waiting period. Could you do that?

MR. LOCKHART: Listen, Tim, the bottom line here is safety, and particularly our kids' safety. And the House bill actually weakens gun legislation, as far as how the gun shows work and the 24 hours. You're talking about--it's not just the 24 hours, it's what gets checked. Under the Republican House proposal, you don't have mental records, you don't have restraining orders. I mean, Mr. LaPierre's happy to talk about Ricky Byrdson and that this is...

MR. LaPIERRE: Joe, you guys don't check mental records right now and you know you guys don't. And the minute you get a chance to take a bill, there you go backing away from it. It's politics you guys are playing with the American public and you ought to be honest.

MR. LOCKHART: Where--I think Mr. LaPierre has demonstrated a sufficient disinterest in real steps towards gun safety, but what we're interested in is getting gun safety. We're not going to accept a bill that weakens gun control laws, that doesn't take steps to build on a solid record over the last seven years. And, frankly, I think over the last week, we have actually made progress. The Smith & Wesson deal, the enormous public disgust with what the NRA and their allies have been up to over the last week and the accusations they've made. And I think we feel much better about getting this through and actually getting something done. It's really hard to underestimate...

MR. LaPIERRE: Joe, the disgust over my rhetoric...

MR. LOCKHART: ...the importance of what Smith & Wesson--what...

MR. LaPIERRE: The disgust over my rhetoric...

MR. LOCKHART: It's...

MR. LaPIERRE: ...is not half as bad as the disgust of prosecutors and cops on the street over you guys' lack of willingness to prosecute when you have them right in your hands.

MR. RUSSERT: That has to be the last word. Joe Lockhart...

MR. LOCKHART: All right, listen, all I can tell you is the numbers here tell the story and Mr. LaPierre I know has trouble with the facts and the numbers. But we've got to get...

MR. LaPIERRE: You guys have a big problem with facts.

MR. LOCKHART: ...Congress moving. We've got to get Congress to do something, because the public doesn't really care about a debate between the NRA and anyone else. What they care about is making the streets safer. That's what we're going to do.

MR. RUSSERT: Joe Lockhart, Wayne LaPierre, to be continued.

MR. LaPIERRE: Thank you.

MR. RUSSERT: Thank you very much.

Coming next, the powerful Republican House whip, Tom "The Hammer" DeLay of Texas.

And is America ready for eight months of Gore versus Bush? All coming up on MEET THE PRESS.

(Announcements)

LANGUAGE: English

LOAD-DATE: March 19, 2000



Anna Richter

03/20/2000 12:26:18 PM

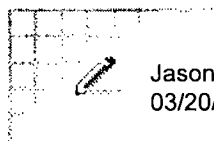
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To: Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP, Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP, Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP, Deanne E. Benos/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: NRA Ads from last week (released march 13)

----- Forwarded by Anna Richter/OPD/EOP on 03/20/2000 12:25 PM -----



Jason H. Schechter

03/20/2000 12:15:50 PM

Record Type: Record

To: James E. Kennedy/WHO/EOP@EOP, Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP

cc:

Subject: these are from last week (released march 13). you probably have these already.

Script of "Insult" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: What an insult, Mr. Clinton. You said the NRA is, quote, "against anything that requires anybody to do anything as a member of society that helps to make it safer." (Source: "The Today Show," March 2, 2000)

Are you talking about the NRA whose gun accident prevention program has been distributed to 12 million school kids? Are you talking about the millions of NRA members who pay for it all?

If that's the NRA you're talking about, sir, you don't know what you're talking about.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "NICS" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Bill Clinton says the NRA stands in the way of sensible gun safety. But it was the NRA who pioneered the criminal background check on gun buyers -- not Bill Clinton.

So when he says a half million criminals were stopped from buying guns, why are almost none prosecuted? He wants criminals turned away. We want criminals turned in.

Mr. Clinton, when what you say is wrong, that's a mistake. When you know it's wrong, that's a lie.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "Crack House" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: When a 6-year-old in a crack house finds a stolen gun and shoots a schoolmate, the president doesn't demand gun theft prosecution or busting drug dealers. He demands safety locks.

Don't get me wrong -- nobody supports safety locks more than the NRA. But his solution is to give crack house drug dealers ... safety locks?

Mr. Clinton, when what you say is wrong, that's a mistake. When you know it's wrong, that's a lie.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "13 Kids" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Bill Clinton says 13 kids die every day from gun accidents. That's not only a lie, it's an insult to the 12 million kids who've learned to avoid gun accidents through NRA programs.

The truth is guns are involved in far fewer accidental childhood deaths than swimming, about 130 a year. (Sources: National Safety Council, Injury facts 1999 Edition; Centers for Disease Control, 1997 accidental deaths per 100,000 ages 0-14)

But we won't rest until there are none.

Mr. Clinton, when what you say is wrong, that's a mistake. When you know it's wrong, that's a lie.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "Legislation" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Bill Clinton says the NRA stands in the way of sensible gun safety. But the truth is Bill Clinton fought legislation that required safety locks on new firearms, required instant background checks on gun show buyers and banned gun possession for violent juveniles forever.

That's right. He fought it, but now he blames the NRA.

Mr. Clinton, when what you say is wrong, that's a mistake. When you know it's wrong, that's a lie. Remember?

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "Criminal Lottery" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Mr. Clinton, before you peddle more gun laws, let's see if you're enforcing what you've got. Of all federal gun convictions in 1998, here's a chilling example of how many went to prison:

Eight in San Francisco, 14 in New Jersey, nine in Pittsburgh, two in Washington, D.C. With odds that good, criminals can't lose.
(Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reports 1998)

More laws won't make us safer, more prosecution will -- with a president who knows the difference.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "Enforcement" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Does it bother you that when someone commits a crime with a gun, Mr. Clinton pops up on TV with another gun law? Especially when his administration barely enforces the gun laws we have now?

Under Bill Clinton, federal gun prosecutions are half -- half -- of what they used to be. (On screen: Federal gun prosecutions down 46 percent, 1992-1998)

Laws don't make you safe. Enforcement does.

Mr. Clinton, when what you say is wrong, that's a mistake. When you know it's wrong, that's a lie. Remember?

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "License Guns" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Mr. Clinton says you should need a license for Second Amendment freedom. I wonder what our founding fathers would think of that.

Since criminals won't bother to sign up, your federal gun register would list only honest gun owners, right? So government bureaucrats would then know who owns what firearms and where they live.

Our founding fathers knew where that leads us, Mr. Clinton, even if you pretend you don't.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "Safety Locks" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: If you believed Mr. Clinton, you'd think the NRA opposes safety locks on guns. The truth is NRA is America's gun safety authority. We support safety locks or storage safes or whatever safety measure suits your situation. And the truth is most gun manufacturers are already providing safety locks.

Mr. Clinton, when what you say is wrong, that's a mistake. When you know it's wrong, that's a lie.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "License Drivers" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Mr. Clinton says, "Let's license guns like we license cars." But there's nothing about licensing drivers that makes anyone safer. It's for taxation.

Licensing drivers doesn't stop speeders, or stop drunk drivers, or even stop unlicensed drivers. Prosecuting bad drivers does that.

So the only reason to license guns is to confiscate them. And that, Mr. Clinton, is what you're really driving at.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "Other Countries" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Mr. Clinton, you said the reason other countries have lower gun control death rates is "because they don't have an NRA in their country." (Source: "The Today Show," March 2, 2000)

With that sweeping slur, you blamed lawful gun owners for the savage acts of murderers.

Now everyone knows what we've said all along. You want a country with no NRA, a country with no Second Amendment. Mr. Clinton, the Bill of Rights is not yours to rewrite. Not in America.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "Mental Records" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Mr. Clinton, we all agree that guns don't belong in the hands of people ruled mentally incompetent. So gun buyer background checks ought to include mental record checks.

Problem is, you say you're for it when you've blocked it at every turn. That's lie Number One. And you say it takes days, when it can be done in minutes. That's lie Number Two.

The public deserves criminal and mental record checks on gun buyers. Not lies.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

Script of "Budgets" (TV)

CHARLTON HESTON: Mr. Clinton, you say you want instant background checks on gun buyers. So do we. But you cut it from your budget.

You say you want instant background checks at gun shows. So do we. But you cut it from your budget.

Mr. Clinton, you can't have what you won't pay for. And when you promise Americans the safety of a system you won't fund, that's not just playing politics. That's a dangerous lie.

(On screen: Paid for by the National Rifle Association of America)

It's a moral crime for Bill Clinton, Al Gore, Janet Reno and a host of Federal officers and prosecutors to fail to enforce the law. It's evil. And when innocent blood flows, it's on their hands.

*Wayne LaPierre
Executive Vice President
National Rifle Association
in American Rifleman,*

[More laws] gives jackbooted Government thugs more power to take away our constitutional rights, break in our doors, seize our guns, destroy our property and even injure and kill us.

*Wayne LaPierre
Executive Vice President
National Rifle Association
in a 1995 fundraising letter*



In recent months, the National Rifle Association has attempted to divert national attention from the shameful weakness of our nation's gun laws by repeating, at every opportunity, the mantra: "We don't need more gun laws when the federal government refuses to enforce existing gun laws." Since the Columbine shooting and the ensuing national outcry, the gun lobby has spent millions of dollars telling the nation that enforcing existing gun laws is a workable substitute for new, common-sense regulation of firearms.

The truth is that gun laws are being enforced more strongly than ever. Overall, federal prosecutions are up 16 percent since President Clinton took office, 22 percent on the local and state level, where most prosecutions take place. Furthermore, sentences for violent gun criminals are two years longer under this Administration. On June 10, 1999, *USAToday* reported that "Gun laws are enforced more vigorously today than five years ago by nearly any measure. Prosecutions are more frequent than ever before; sentences are longer; and the number of inmates in federal prison is at a record level. The number of inmates in federal prison on firearm or arson charges (the two are lumped together) increased 51% from 1993 to 1998...A U.S. Sentencing Commission analysis done for USA TODAY shows that lying on the background check form is prosecuted in federal court far more often than acknowledged."

Why then does the NRA persist in falsely accusing the President of failing to enforce existing law? Because it knows that lawmakers are facing the most intense pressure yet from the American people to strengthen our gun laws. Lost in this debate is the fact that, throughout its history, the NRA has worked tirelessly to either block or weaken the enactment of laws that would have strengthened the federal capacity to fight gun crimes. The NRA's painstaking work to eviscerate the very laws they now say must be enforced, reveals their current public relations campaign to be the height of hypocrisy. This report details the many ways in which the gun lobby itself has hampered the nation's ability to enforce gun laws.

INTRODUCTION

The gun lobby's influence on our firearm laws is undeniable – the laws are a swiss cheese of loopholes that defy logic and exist solely for the convenience of gun owners and the profit of gun manufacturers. At the cost of millions of dollars and an untold number of lives, the National Rifle Association has placed obstacles and detours at each and every turn on the path to common sense gun legislation and has successfully limited both the reach and implementation of gun control laws.

In 1968, following the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, and a marked increase in handgun violence throughout the country, Congress passed the Gun Control Act of 1968. The Gun Control Act specifically banned the interstate shipment of firearms and ammunition to private individuals; prohibited the sale of guns to groups such as minors, drug addicts, mental incompetents, and convicted felons; strengthened licensing and recordkeeping requirements for gun dealers and collectors; increased penalties for those who used guns in the commission of crimes covered by federal law; and banned the importation of foreign surplus firearms, except those suitable for sporting purposes. While the Gun Control Act had a modest impact, it did not take long for the gun lobby to regroup and attempt to weaken the act's provisions.

The NRA, for example, can take credit for enacting legislation specifically exempting domestically manufactured guns from any consumer safety standards. When Congress created the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in 1972, it exempted firearms. All other consumer products, except tobacco, are regulated for safety. But, thanks to the gun lobby, guns are not. When asked why the bill to incorporate guns under the CPSC had failed in Congress, Senator Howard Metzenbaum (D-OH) a staunch supporter of common sense gun laws, said, "The NRA's position is consistent. They're opposed to any legislation that has the word 'gun' anywhere in it." When asked what would happen if the NRA dropped its opposition to the bill, Metzenbaum replied, "We would pass the bill overnight."

This loophole has led to tragic and predictable consequences. Gun manufacturers make guns that require so little trigger pressure that two-year-olds can fire them. They make weapons which lack even the most basic safety features like a load indicator or a magazine disconnect safety. They have focussed all of their efforts on making guns smaller -- and therefore easier to conceal -- and more lethal. Without regulation, gun manufacturers lack any incentive to design safer firearms. Instead, thanks to the NRA, gun manufacturers have enjoyed tremendous profits while producing products with a callous disregard for safety.

By examining the NRA's role in just three aspects of federal gun control – the McClure-Volkmer Act, the Brady Law, and funding of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms – it is clear that the gun lobby's recent calls for better enforcement of the current laws are merely a smokescreen to fend off overwhelming public sentiment for stronger gun laws. The picture that emerges is one of NRA leadership and complicity in ensuring that this nation's gun laws are as weak and as difficult as possible to enforce.

THE MCCLURE-VOLKMER ACT: THE NRA WEAKENS ENFORCEMENT

After the passage of the Gun Control Act of 1968, the NRA's assault against any and all regulation of guns continued into the 1980's, but the tactics changed. Whereas the NRA typically opposed any proposed common sense gun legislation, in the 1980's they switched from the defensive to the offensive with the McClure-Volkmer Act, a bill sponsored by two NRA Legion of Honor recipients, Sen. James McClure (R-ID) and Rep. Harold Volkmer (D-MO). With the McClure-Volkmer Act, also known as the Firearms Owners Protection Act of 1986, the NRA decided to *pursue* gun legislation for the first time – in order to weaken the modest gun regulations enacted with the Gun Control Act of 1968.

Law enforcement groups around the country were outraged – they saw what the NRA was attempting to do and at what cost. The NRA proposals were going to put law enforcement officers at risk. The NRA was undeterred, however, and as *The New York Times* observed, “it was a measure of the power of the gun lobby that no member of Congress, in the day-long debate, spoke in favor of keeping all the existing controls. Rather, the question was the extent to which they should be eased.” The NRA spent around \$1.6 million dollars in its lobbying campaign – but the passage of the bill cost the NRA more than dollars – McClure-Volkmer cost the NRA support from law enforcement groups. Around the country, police officers had to swallow a bitter pill: the NRA was unwilling to accept any gun control legislation, even if it would save officers' lives. Hubert Williams, President of the Police Foundation, best described the problems with the McClure-Volkmer Act in his testimony before the Judiciary Committee:

Law enforcement's examination of the McClure-Volkmer bill comes down to this: It would gut the 1968 Gun Control Act, and thus it would make the job of protecting American citizens all the more difficult. Congress passed the 1968 Gun Control Act in response to terrible tragedies: the assassinations by firearms of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy.

To support McClure-Volkmer is to demean their record of accomplishment and their noble legacy. Those who support McClure-Volkmer cannot say that they also support American law enforcement, for the obvious fact is that the bill increases the threat to the lives of police officers.

As the law enforcement officers of this country predicted, what McClure-Volkmer accomplished was to make it much more difficult for local and federal law enforcement agencies to enforce the nation's gun laws. The result has been a gun law riddled with loopholes and an enforcement agency saddled with restrictions.

In practice, the McClure-Volkmer Act has:

- Allowed unlicensed individuals to sell their personal firearms as a “hobby,” allowing for the sale of massive numbers of firearms to criminals and juveniles without background checks, since only those licensed dealers “engaged in the business” of selling firearms are required to check the status of their purchasers. The critically important definition of “engaged in the business” gave many people the basis to contend that their firearm activities do not rise to the level that requires them to obtain a license and be regulated by the federal government.

- Increased the size, scope and visibility of gun shows by permitting federally licensed dealers (FFLs) to conduct business at gun shows located in their home state. Although FFLs must conduct background checks on gun-show purchasers, their presence at these arms bazaars has unquestionably enlarged the impact of these events, where private sellers sell hundreds of weapons without background checks to prohibited purchasers.
- Allowed criminals to keep or regain their rights to own guns. The original Gun Control Act made it unlawful for persons convicted of a crime punishable by a prison term exceeding one year to possess a firearm. The McClure-Volkmer Act amended the GCA to provide that the law of the jurisdiction where the crime occurred would determine what constitutes such a conviction. (In many states, illegal possession of firearms, for example, or domestic abuse, is only a misdemeanor.) Additionally, the McClure-Volkmer Act provided that a pardon, set aside or restoration of civil rights removes the "conviction" for purposes of gun ownership. You may not be able to vote after you get out of jail, but you can get your gun back.
- Severely restricted the ability of the ATF to conduct inspections of the business premises of federally licensed firearms dealers.
- Raised the burden of proof for violations of federal gun laws.

No wonder police officers, in full uniform, stood at parade rest at the entrance to the floor of the House of Representatives as a sign of silent opposition to McClure-Volkmer during a crucial vote. It is no exaggeration to say that, fifteen years later, law enforcement is still standing in opposition to the gun lobby's successful attempt to cripple its ability to enforce the law.

"Engaged in the Business": A Fatal Definition

The Gun Control Act of 1968 first required federal firearm licenses for those "engaged in the business." The definition of that phrase was substantially narrowed by the McClure-Volkmer Act. Prior to the 1986 Act, illegal gun dealing was a matter for a court or jury to determine on the basis of the facts presented by prosecutors. After McClure-Volkmer became law, the Government was required to meet a much tougher, multi-part standard of proof to illustrate that someone was "engaged in the business" without a license. To successfully prosecute an individual for illegal gun dealing, the ATF must now show that the unlicensed person engaged in "a regular course of trade or business with the principal objective of livelihood and profit through the repetitive purchase and resale of firearms...." The definition of "engaged in the business" also expressly excludes any "person who makes occasional sales, exchanges, or purchases of firearms for the enhancement of a personal collection or for a hobby, or who sells all or part of his personal collection of firearms," *regardless of its size*. By essentially demanding responsible behavior only from those gun sellers who have received a federal firearms license, this loophole allows the enormous secondary market for guns - at gun shows, over the Internet, and through individual private sales - to flourish unimpeded by any restrictions on buyers or sellers.

As a result, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of firearms sales are made every year by individuals who may each sell an unlimited number of guns without obtaining a federal firearms license. Even at substantial investigative cost, such persons often cannot be successfully prosecuted for illegal gun dealing given the weakness of current law. As a result, the customers of such "shadow sellers" are not subject to a background check (as they would be if purchasing a gun from a licensed dealer) and shadow sellers are not required to keep any records of their sales

whatsoever. Accordingly, guns sold by such sellers later recovered at a crime scene cannot be effectively traced and (unless they yield fingerprints) are thus useless to law enforcement authorities trying to find and arrest murderers and other violent criminals.

Facilitating the Markets of Choice for Criminals: The Rise of Gun Shows After McClure-Volkmer

The McClure-Volkmer Act allowed licensed gun dealers to participate in gun shows in their home states and effectively popularized a significant source of criminal guns. Prior to the Act, the policy of the ATF prohibited sales by licensees at anywhere *other* than their regular place of business. While dealers were allowed to exhibit at gun shows, the actual sales had to be consummated at their place of business. The McClure-Volkmer Act changed that – dealers could both exhibit and sell weapons at gun shows and, as a result, gun shows began to flourish across the country. At the same time, Congress relaxed the law that distinguished gun dealers from “occasional” sellers, thereby permitting thousands of additional sellers to enter the field. After McClure-Volkmer, the combination of dealers freed from their storefronts and the new class of “private” sellers resulted in a dramatic increase in the number and size of gun shows nationwide. Gun shows no longer included only small-time collectors. After McClure-Volkmer, larger licensed dealers began to participate and were able to provide gun shows the merchandise necessary to attract customers. Indeed, the atmosphere of gun shows, usually held for one weekend only, leads to an atmosphere of impulse buying, which benefits both licensees and non-licensees alike.

A January 1999 report by the Departments of Justice and Treasury summarized the threat of gun shows:

Gun shows provide a large market where criminals can shop for firearms anonymously. Unlicensed sellers have no way of knowing whether they are selling to a violent felon or someone who intends to illegally traffic guns on the streets to juveniles or gangs. Further, unscrupulous gun dealers can use these free-flowing markets to hide their off-the-book sales. While most gun show sellers are honest and law-abiding, it only takes a few to transfer large numbers of firearms into dangerous hands.

In most states and under federal law, gun shows also provide legal outlets for individuals to sell guns from their “private collections” without a waiting period or background check on the purchaser. Many unscrupulous gun dealers exploit this loophole to operate full-fledged businesses without following federal gun laws.

Moreover, gun shows provide even licensees with the opportunity to sell off their “personal collections.” The McClure-Volkmer Act allowed licensees to sell guns from their personal collections. Federally licensed gun dealers must conduct Brady background checks on all prospective purchasers of firearms in their business inventory and record the serial number of all guns purchased (together with the name and address of the gun's purchaser) in a bound volume maintained by the seller. Such requirements do not apply to guns sold by a licensed dealer which allegedly come from his or her “personal collection” of firearms, if the weapon sold has been in the dealer's personal collection for more than one year or did not originally come from the dealer's

business inventory. *The law places no limit on the number of such "personal guns" that a licensed dealer may sell "off the books."*

As a result, nobody knows, or is able to determine, how many thousands of "off the books" sales are made by unscrupulous federally licensed firearms dealers under cover of the "personal collection" loophole. What we do know is that every such gun, despite being sold by a licensed dealer, can be sold without a background check to a felon, fugitive, domestic abuser or other prohibited purchaser and can't be traced if used in a crime. The same holds true for gun show sales in general, since so many sales that occur at gun shows are essentially unregulated, guns obtained at these shows that are later used in crime are difficult, if not impossible, to trace. According to the ATF, 25-50 percent of the vendors at most gun shows are unlicensed dealers. Felons buying or selling firearms were involved in more than 46 percent of the ATF investigations involving gun shows. In more than a third of the investigations, the firearms were known to have been involved in subsequent crimes, including assault, robbery, burglary and homicide. Not surprisingly, a February 1999 ATF report found approximately 10 percent of the guns used in crimes by juveniles and young people were sold at gun shows and flea markets.

Easy Access to Firearms (Even for Felons)

The NRA-backed McClure-Volkmer provisions eased restrictions against felons gaining access to firearms. The Gun Control Act of 1968 made it illegal for anyone convicted of a felony to ship, transport, possess or receive firearms in interstate commerce. Under that law, a felon could regain firearm privileges by being pardoned or having his civil rights restored, but only if the pardoning authority expressly authorized the possession of a firearm. With McClure-Volkmer, Congress amended the law to provide that unless a pardon or restoration of rights expressly provides that the person may *not* ship, transport, possess, or receive firearms, it has the effect of restoring such privileges. Accordingly, the burden is now on the authority that grants the pardon or restores the felon's civil rights to state *specifically* that the felon *may not* possess firearms.

While the NRA is preaching enforcement, it is clear that it effectively has weakened the nation's gun laws to the point that *even felons* have easier access to firearms.

ATF Can Do Its Job (But Only Once A Year)

Prior to the adoption of the McClure-Volkmer Act, the ATF was permitted to inspect the inventory and records of a licensed importer, manufacturer or dealer for compliance with applicable laws at all reasonable times. The Act, however, limited the ATF to a single unannounced inspection of an individual dealer in any 12-month period [see Section 923(g)(1)(B)(ii)(I) of title 18]. No other retailer of regulated products is so protected. The express purpose of this provision was to prevent what the NRA termed "ATF harassment" of gun dealers. Indeed, according to the NRA, the ATF's only purpose was to harass honest citizens. As one-time NRA Board Member U.S. Congressman John Dingell (D-MI) declared, and NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre quoted in his book, *Guns, Crime and Freedom*, "If I were to select a jack-booted group of fascists who were perhaps as large a danger to American society as I could pick today, I would pick BATF. They are a shame and a disgrace to our country."

Although inspections of licensed firearms dealers are among the most effective means to uncover violations of firearms laws, the stringent limitation on inspections ensures that criminal conduct by some FFLs will go unchecked and unpunished. In effect, a dealer who has been inspected by the ATF in early January knows that he now has eleven months before he can anticipate another visit by agents. In sharp contrast, ATF agents are permitted unlimited surprise inspections of explosives manufacturers, distributors and retailers.

In addition to inadequate inspections, the McClure-Volkmer Act also essentially guarantees that the ATF would be unable to maintain adequate records for any useful amount of time. The Act codified the law requiring that upon permanently closing a regulated business, a federal firearms licensee is required to forward all sales records required to be kept by law on the business premises (including the names and addresses of gun purchasers), to the Secretary of the Treasury. Since 1978, however, Congress has added a rider to the Treasury-Postal appropriations bill forbidding the Secretary from using any appropriated funds to consolidate or centralize within the Department any records maintained by federal firearms licensees. As a result, the Treasury Department is now restricted to keeping records of defunct firearms dealers on microfiche searchable only by the serial number of a gun. In that form, this large body of historical data is thus useless to law enforcement authorities with cause to research the firearms purchase histories of convicted felons, batterers and other prohibited purchasers who may pose a danger to the community. The data is also unavailable for rapid search for law enforcement authorities faced with a hostage or barricade-type emergency who need to know whether the perpetrator has amassed an arsenal by legal means. Moreover, many guns used in crime are not identifiable by serial number, because criminals file or burn identifying markings off their guns. In the end, the ATF's inability to maintain records for any length of time or in any usable manner renders ineffective the recordkeeping provision and frustrates its attempts to do what the NRA claims it wants – enforcement of the laws.

Prosecution With One Arm Tied Behind the Agency's Back

The McClure-Volkmer Act ensured that the ATF would be unable to prosecute dealers who violate federal gun regulations by raising the standard for prosecution to the impossibly high "willfulness standard." The law provides that the Secretary of the Treasury may revoke a federal firearms license for "willful violation" of applicable laws and regulations by the licensee after the licensee is given notice and an opportunity for an administrative hearing. The high "willfulness standard" was enacted at the request of the NRA, which accused the ATF of harassing gun owners. As the NRA's Wayne LaPierre has claimed, "they (ATF agents) behave like street thugs. Charged with enforcing federal gun control laws, federal agents persecute and entrap citizens who have done nothing wrong and would never contemplate doing anything wrong."

To prevent this perceived harassment, the McClure-Volkmer Act restricted the ATF's ability to pursue those in violation of the laws. Except for failures to comply with the Brady Law, the ATF has no authority to simply fine an FFL or to temporarily suspend his or her license for infractions that do not warrant permanent revocation of a license. By forcing the ATF to take a "revoke or pass" approach to FFL policing, current law assures that dealers who deserve discipline short of revocation will go unpunished and remain undeterred from continuing to violate important provisions of the law. Even if a violation warrants revocation of an FFL's license, because of the "willful violation" standard, in order to revoke a license, the ATF must prove that the violator knew

the law and then decided to violate it. *A licensee's claim of ignorance or misunderstanding of the law operates as a full defense.* The “willful violation” standard all but ensures that only a few violators will ever be punished. Criminal cases use the “beyond a reasonable doubt” standard – the “willful violation” standard is much higher – and in criminal cases ignorance of the law is no excuse. Effectively, unless the licensee admits to knowingly and intentionally having violated the law, the ATF will usually fail to meet the “willful violation” standard and the licensee will go unpunished.

According to the Department of the Treasury, in FY1999 only 1,700 compliance inspections were conducted of the nearly 104,000 federal firearms licensees (most of which are dealers or pawnbrokers.) Just 13 dealers' licenses were revoked by ATF, but 56% of those inspected had violations which warranted follow-up inspections at the earliest opportunity. Presumably many of those dealers would have been issued fines or had their licenses suspended if the law permitted such actions. Again, the McClure-Volkmer Act has ensured that the enforcement of the laws is continually frustrated.

THE BRADY BILL: NRA LOST THE WAR BUT WON SOME BATTLES

With the passage of the Brady Bill in 1993, Congress enacted the most important piece of gun control legislation since 1968. This historical event was the result of nearly a decade of struggle against the no-holds-barred opposition of the NRA. The NRA argued that the requirement of a pre-purchase background check and short waiting period for handgun purchases contained the seeds of "Government" confiscation of all firearms. As the NRA testified, it did not believe background checks to be "in the public's interest." However, true to its usual lobbying form, when passage of the Brady Bill seemed unstoppable, the NRA shifted its lobbying and grassroots resources into weakening the law to the maximum degree possible.

In 1988, the NRA warned its members that the Brady Bill would result in "total, strict gun control on all America" and that it would cause the government to "spend millions and billions of your tax dollars investigating you and other honest citizens." Later in 1991, an article in *USAToday* said, "Since helping to defeat the waiting period in 1988, the NRA has done little to tout an 'instant-check alternative' it quickly embraced this year."

Even more telling was this description of the NRA's actions in the state of Georgia, taken from a 1997 editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution*: "...to escape the waiting period in Georgia, the NRA reversed its long-standing position and pushed a bill creating the state's instant background check. But it also tried to plant a self-destruct device in the law. The NRA and its supporters wanted to make sure that if the federal Brady Law was ever declared unconstitutional, Georgia's background check would be repealed automatically."

During the battle to pass the Brady Bill, the NRA's staunchest Senate allies let it be known that the "price" of their acquiescence to a vote on the measure would be compromises that have since severely frustrated the true intent of the law. While the NRA opposed background checks – and continues to do so today, they relented to the Brady Bill *as long as it required the destruction of all records associated with the Brady background check*, even at the potential expense of the system's integrity and utility to law enforcement authorities.

The NRA Never Met a Background Check It Didn't Hate

In the wake of the Columbine massacre on April 20, 1999, in which several weapons obtained through gun show sales were used to kill 12 students and a teacher, senior spokespersons for the NRA repeatedly claimed that the Association had long-supported conducting gun show background checks. *Such claims were completely and knowingly false.* In fact, the NRA fought for more than a decade against the minimal requirement that licensed gun dealers perform background checks until the Brady Bill finally became law in 1993 *over the NRA's objections.* At the time of Brady, the NRA argued for an "instant check" system, knowing that criminal history records were insufficiently computerized to ensure effective checks. As political scientist Robert Spitzer noted, "[b]y proposing an alternative of little or no feasibility, the NRA and its allies were offering a plan that seemed to offer a meaningful reform yet posed no actual change in gun purchasing procedures for many years to come." As a compromise, the bill was passed with a termination date for the waiting period requirement and the provision for the research and development of an "instant check" system. Now, \$200,000,000 later, the FBI has developed the technology for an "instant

check” system and millions of records have been computerized, and the NRA has the gall to say the Brady background check is in fact the “NRA instant check.”

Despite the NRA’s persistent attempts to thwart the law, the Brady background check has proven effective. The Department of Treasury notes that the Brady Bill, “for the first time empowered FFLS and law enforcement to combat the practice of ‘lying and buying.’ ” Moreover, since the Brady Law went into effect, background checks nationwide have stopped approximately 500,000 felons and other prohibited persons from buying handguns. The Justice Department has estimated that, in the first five years of the Brady Law, 3/4 of those rejected from buying a handgun were felons (or under felony indictment), domestic abusers or under restraining order. Felons alone made up 63% of those rejected.

Even with the success of the Brady background check system, however, the NRA has *never* supported this precautionary measure since it refuses to support extending background checks to all purchasers. Again, it must be stressed that current law only requires background checks for purchases made through FFLs, even though every year, more than 4,000 gun shows are held nationwide at which tens of thousands of firearms are legally offered for sale by private, unlicensed individuals on a "no-questions-asked," "cash-and-carry," "no-background-check" basis. The Internet has also opened a vast new market for the sale and exchange of firearms. Although out-of-state transfers are supposed to be handled through licensed gun dealers, who are required to handle the background check process, in practice there is no current way to police private transactions on the Internet. Despite such popular secondary gun markets, the NRA has refused to support an extension of the background check requirement to these venues.

In fact, as recently as the spring of 1999, the NRA unsuccessfully opposed Senator Frank Lautenberg’s (D-NJ) amendment to the Juvenile Justice Bill in the Senate to require such checks at gun shows and it helped kill comparable legislation the following month in the House of Representatives. It did so by authoring and backing a proposal by former NRA Board member Rep. John Dingell to drastically cut the time that law enforcement authorities would have been permitted to complete gun show background checks (from 3 business days to just 24 hours).

Again, the NRA proposed an alternative of little or no feasibility – the NRA-Dingell proposal would not work. According to the FBI, had the Dingell Amendment been the law for the six months preceding the House debate, over 17,000 individuals who were refused the ability to buy a gun from a gun dealer would have been able to obtain one over-the-counter. That's why the NRA-authored Dingell Amendment was opposed by most major national law enforcement organizations and the National Association of Stocking Gun Dealers. Although the NRA now says it supports background checks – and claims to have even authored the current background check system – they have been steadfast in their opposition to any background check that would effectively prevent prohibited purchasers from gaining access to firearms. Instead, when push comes to shove, the NRA will only support provisions that do not inconvenience gun buyers – and also fail to promote the laws.

The Paranoia of “Lists” – NRA Recordkeeping Provisions Continually Frustrate Law Enforcement

The gun lobby has spent much time and money to convince Congress and the American public that enforcement of current gun laws, meaning the stringent prosecution and incarceration of gun criminals, is the key to addressing the problem of gun violence. What they will not tell you is that it is their paranoia about maintaining any sort of gun records that presents law enforcement with the single largest impediment to successful prosecution.

Currently the Brady Law requires a federally licensed gun dealer to contact the national instant background check system before completing a sales transaction and a record of the background check inquiry is kept. The record consists solely of an identifier number assigned to the inquiry and the date of the sale. ***By law, all other information about the purchaser and the gun purchased must be destroyed.***

As a result, premature destruction of instant background check records precludes the effective audit of the check system for accuracy and the absence of fraud. It also deprives law enforcement authorities of a valuable snapshot of firearms sales and/or purchasing activities by dealers under suspicion of illegal dealing and by purchasers under investigation for weapons or other criminal offenses.

Along with the destruction of all records related to Brady background checks, the NRA demanded as the price of Senate passage of the Brady Bill a provision requiring local authorities to destroy their copies of multiple gun sale forms less than three weeks after their receipt. Federally licensed firearms dealers are required to file a report with the Secretary of the Treasury reporting the sale of two or more handguns to any single individual within any five consecutive business days. A copy of the report also must be filed with state or local law enforcement authorities. Although the ATF may retain so-called "multiple sale" forms, federal law requires state and local authorities to destroy all such forms (and any record of them having been filed) within 20 days of receiving them. The multiple sale reporting requirement does not cover purchases made at different FFLs. A purchaser can buy as many guns as he likes, without worrying about a multiple sale report, so long as the guns are purchased from different licensees.

Without the legal ability to maintain and periodically review multiple sale reports for purchasing patterns, efforts by State and local law enforcement authorities to identify and prosecute gun traffickers are seriously compromised. Given its severely limited resources, the ATF cannot reasonably be expected to conduct customized research on demand in its database of multiple sales reports for states and localities. Furthermore, the law's failure to address purchases made at various FFLs prevents the ATF from monitoring what are effectively multiple sale purchases and leaves unchecked a primary source of illegal gun trafficking.

The inability to retain multiple sales information for any period of time also severely restricts the usefulness of the information. This is unfortunate given the important role multiple sales play in the illegal secondary gun market. Research by the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence further demonstrates that multiple handgun purchases disproportionately involve the purchase of categories of handguns that have been linked to crime (e.g., Saturday Night Specials

and handguns with the shortest intervals of time between the purchase and recovery by law enforcement). The finding was particularly apparent for bulk purchases that involved the highest number of guns. Specifically, the Center found that Saturday Night Specials accounted for 17.5% of all pistols purchased in bulk and over 25% of pistols purchased in transactions involving five or more handguns. Furthermore, of the handguns recovered from youth and juveniles as part of the 1998 Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiatives, handguns with the shortest “time to crime” accounted for 32% of pistols purchased in transactions of 5 or more handguns. There is a close correlation between multiple sales and the illegal market – unfortunately, law enforcement is not given the tools necessary to pursue these issues and as a result, the market continues unabated.

THE ATF: UNDERMANNED AND OVERREGULATED

The ATF is the lead enforcement agency for federal gun laws and statutes. While the NRA cries for the enforcement of the laws, no one should forget that the NRA has made sport of vilifying the agency chiefly entrusted with the task of enforcing the laws and has blocked all legislation designed to empower it. The NRA has repeatedly claimed the ATF harasses gun owners and dealers. In the 1981 NRA-produced film, *It Can Happen Here*, the NRA depicted ATF agents as Gestapo-like fascists. During Congressional hearings the following year, one-time NRA Board member Rep. John Dingell called ATF agents “knaves and rogues” and said, “I would love to put them in jail. I would dearly love it.” Of the agency, he said, “I think they are evil.”

Concurrent with their ongoing smear campaign against the ATF, the NRA has waged a sustained and successful Congressional campaign to fiscally cripple ATF's firearms enforcement activities by minimizing the Agency's budget in an era of high inflation. This campaign has taken a heavy toll in the Agency's enforcement personnel. Between 1980 and 1987, for example, the number of ATF agents was slashed from 1,502 to 1,180 (-21.5%) and the number of inspectors dropped from 655 to 626 even as the number of licensed firearms dealers exploded.

Emboldened by its success in the '80s, the NRA escalated its lobbying and its rhetoric in the '90s, calling ATF agents "jackbooted thugs" in a now infamous fundraising letter signed by Wayne LaPierre. Challenged on the slur in the media and Congress, LaPierre initially defended the slur on all federal law enforcement officers before "clarifying" his intent. Former President George Bush wasn't convinced and resigned his NRA life membership in protest. Nonetheless, the NRA has refused to temper its character assassination of ATF and the many men and women who place themselves in harm's way every day to enforce the nation's NRA-sabotaged firearms laws. As recently as February 3 of this year, Rep. Helen Chenoweth (R-ID), a recipient of the NRA's Legion of Honor award, described President Clinton's plan to enhance ATF resources as a “charade” that would “unleash 500 more abusive ATF agents on the American public.”

Law enforcement agencies – the groups the NRA pleads with to enforce the laws – understand the NRA's agenda to weaken and deride the ATF. As William J. Bratton, former New York City Police Commissioner observed, “the NRA has strenuously opposed increased financing for the bureau and has successfully lobbied against giving it the authority to quickly investigate the origins of gun sales.” As a result of the NRA's tactics, for more than 25 years, Congress has provided ATF with far fewer funds than necessary to hire, train, equip and support a sufficient number of inspectors and agents to effectively enforce the nation's firearms laws. For example, in 1973, ATF and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) had comparable numbers of agents and enjoyed nearly equal funding (about \$250 million). By 1998, however, the number of DEA agents had almost tripled (from 1,470 to 4,261), while ATF's remained static (1,631 ATF agents were on payroll in 1998, only 9 more than were employed in 1973). The DEA's budget grew to nearly 1.4 billion in 1998. ATF's funding, by contrast, increased to just \$450 million in the same year (adjusted for inflation). Additionally, ATF agents assigned to gun violations are required by law to spend at least 25% of their time investigating the misuse of explosive devices and illegal tobacco sales. Virtually no other federal law enforcement agency's resources are stretched so thin.

Insufficient funding means, necessarily, inadequate inspection and oversight of the more than 104,000 federal firearms licensees who are currently firearms dealers. Inadequate inspection, in turn, means undetected illegal gun trafficking, "straw purchases" of firearms by sham buyers for criminals and other individuals, and the kind of potentially sloppy dealer recordkeeping that can cripple crime gun tracing efforts. The ATF estimates that, in order to inspect each currently licensed gun dealer just once during his or her three-year license term, the agency would need to hire, train and deploy approximately 500 more inspectors (excluding support personnel and equipment) than it can now afford. Thanks to the NRA – the ATF has been inadequately funded and staffed, as well as unjustly maligned – and now they are asking the agency to more aggressively enforce the laws.

CONCLUSION

This brief survey of three aspects of the gun debate – the McClure-Volkmer Act, the Brady Law and funding of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms – illustrates that, when the NRA complains about the “lack of enforcement,” it is guilty of hypocrisy on a grand scale. Unfortunately, there are many, many more examples of NRA action on the state and local level that further demonstrate the hollowness of the its rhetoric. Most gun laws are state, not federal, ones and the NRA has just as much of a stranglehold on many state legislatures as it does on Congress. Its ongoing campaign to weaken state laws on carrying concealed handguns – over the objections of law enforcement – is yet another example of the NRA’s extremist agenda.

If the NRA wants Congress to step up enforcement, it should work to reverse the decades-long damage that has been done to our gun laws at its behest. The NRA knows the ATF is understaffed; indeed, their lobbying efforts have resulted in Congress continually underfunding the agency. The NRA knows the laws are weak – they have spent millions of dollars making sure of that. And now, the NRA claims that the fault lies with the President, the Vice President, and the Attorney General, federal officers, and prosecutors. Enough with the rhetoric. If we want the gun laws enforced, let’s remove the obstacles to enforcement. Let’s strengthen the laws that work and let’s empower the agency that enforces those laws.

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NATIONAL REPUBLICAN SENATORIAL COMMITTEE

SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL
Chairman

February 29, 2000

|||||

I want to thank you for renewing your membership in the National Republican Senatorial Committee in this all-important 2000 election year – and for your generous donation of \$20.

By renewing your membership, you've proven your commitment to saving the Senate Republican Majority from defeat – by a coordinated Democrat attack that is already underway!

Just think what it will be like IF Ted Kennedy and Hillary Rodham Clinton manage to get control of the U.S. Senate – making decisions that affect YOUR LIFE on taxes, education, health care and crime control. Not to mention that all the work our Republican Senators have done to protect Social Security and rebuild our armed forces will be wiped out within a year's time.

How real is this scenario? We have *ten* mortally endangered GOP incumbents to defend – the Democrats have just *one*. They have already passed us up in fundraising because of massive chunks of money pouring in from Big Labor, trial lawyers and Hollywood. They are already on the air savaging our best candidates, yet right now, we can barely afford to respond to their lies.

This is why I am so thrilled you are part of my team to stop the Democrats from keeping our country mired in the Clinton agenda of bigger government, higher taxes and shameless lying. Our work has just begun!

Sincerely,

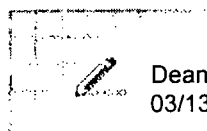
Senator Mitch McConnell, Chairman

P.S. Great news! Because of unified Republican opposition, Bill Clinton was able to get his way only 37% of the time last year – an all-time low for any President! The bad news is he is bent on revenge, raising millions of dollars a night for vicious attack ads, and pushing all sorts of new spending programs, including \$280 million for gun control! With an extra gift of \$20 from you, we can keep our Republican men and women in the Senate and fight for YOU! Thank you!

425 SECOND STREET, N.E. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002-4967

www.nrscc.org

PLEASE DETACH THE REPLY MEMORANDUM BELOW AND RETURN IT WITH YOUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION



Deanne E. Benos
03/13/2000 10:51:01 PM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP, Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP
cc: Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP, Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP
Subject: Letter on Maryland Gun Bill.

FYI -- IGA has informed us that Podesta wants the President to write a quick letter in to Governor Glendenig and the Maryland House of Delegates in support of the governor's omnibus gun bill package, and to make a statement at a fundraiser in Maryland on Wednesday in support of the package and of the efforts of states, like Maryland, to move gun safety legislation despite Congress' refusal to act. I attended a meeting today with IGA and some members of the Maryland State Legislature that have been active on this package said that most of it will probably pass, but that the smart gun mandate section will not.

We wanted to get your guidance on how to proceed. Leanne and I have a one-page summary of the bill that I have faxed to your office. Since we could support the bill in theory, but haven't vetted many of the provisions -- we have suggested that IGA send a general letter of support for the Governor's efforts to pass stronger gun laws despite Congress' lack of action on the issue. Do you think we need to go any further on this? The problem is that the bill has good things, such as ballistics testing, increased funding for firearms enforcement and firearms training, but some of the other pieces are either weaker or stronger than our position -- such as a juvenile brady provision that only restricts gun ownership for violent juvenile offenders until age 30 and a mandate on smart gun technology. In addition, you should know that Delegate Peter Franchot, has been talking with Podesta about his licensing bill (that is apparently similar to the President's initiative, as announced) that he wants the Governor to add on to his package -- this has not happened yet. I have asked IGA to assess whether any promises were made on this issue and if they want the President to comment on this initiative as well at either the fundraiser or in the letter.

THE RESPONSIBLE GUN SAFETY ACT (SB211/HB279)

We all have a responsibility to protect our children. We must take a specific, realistic and aggressive approach for reducing the danger to our children posed by guns.

- ✓ The Responsible Gun Safety Act (SB211/HB279) requires by January 1, 2002 any new handguns sold in Maryland to be equipped with an integrated mechanical safety device to prevent children and other unauthorized users from firing the handgun.
- ✓ The Administration bill will require that a person may not sell or offer for sale in Maryland a handgun manufactured after May 31, 2003 unless it is manufactured with incorporated design technology allowing the handgun to be fired only by authorized users, if such technology is commercially available.
- ✓ The Responsible Gun Safety Act will enhance existing gun laws and increase enforcement to protect children by placing a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years for the illegal possession of a firearm by a felon previously convicted for a violent crime or drug offense. This penalty is similar to the federal penalty used by federal prosecutors in Project Disarm and Project Exile.
- ✓ The Responsible Gun Safety Act provides "CeaseFire" grant funds to enforce existing gun laws and innovative local law enforcement initiatives and programs, such as the Federal DISARM Program and Baltimore City's Firearms Investigation and Violence Enforcement Unit.
- ✓ The Responsible Gun Safety Act will also prohibit any person who as a juvenile committed a violent delinquent act from possessing a handgun until age 30.
- ✓ The Administration bill requires that all guns seized, confiscated and subject to forfeiture to or by any law enforcement agencies in the State shall be destroyed or retained for the official law enforcement use.
- ✓ The bill requires ballistics fingerprinting of all new handguns prior to sale. Firearm dealers will be required to collect and provide certain handgun identification information to the Maryland State Police.
- ✓ Under SB211/HB279, the Police Training Commission will be required to develop gun safety standards. By January 1, 2002, all gun purchasers will be required to submit evidence of certified firearms safety training.
- ✓ Starting in tax year 2000, the Administration bill (SB209/HB280) provides for a tax credit for the purchase of gun safes/vaults and locking devices for all firearms. (contingent on the passage of the Responsible Gun Safety Act)

This proposed legislation is based on the recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on Childproof Guns.

PATAKI PROPOSES STIFF GUN CONTROL

Suggests Restrictions Opposed
by Many in His Own Party

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA

ALBANY, March 14 — Swimming against the tide of his own party, Gov. George E. Pataki today proposed a sweeping package of gun controls, including mandatory trigger locks with gun sales, a ban on assault weapons and steps to make it easier for the police to trace guns used in crimes.

Gun control advocates say the measures, if enacted, would give New York among the strictest gun controls in the country.

"Ultimately, if you think it's the right thing, you have to pursue it," Mr. Pataki told ABC News in an interview tonight. "I'm hopeful we can get this through the Legislature."

One of the measures would require so-called ballistics fingerprinting, which would record the unique markings from all new guns so that bullets and shell casings could later be traced to them.

In the interview, the governor called for raising the legal age for gun purchases to 21 from 18, and said he would seek to close a loophole in the system of background checks for gun buyers by requiring that those checks be done on buyers at gun shows and flea markets, not just on those who buy in stores. Aides to Mr. Pataki said he would unveil details of his proposals at a news conference Wednesday. The proposals are expected to pass in the Democratic-controlled Assembly, though their fate in the Republican-dominated Senate is uncertain.

Some of the proposals put Mr. Pataki, who harbors ambitions of national office, at odds with the Republican leaders in Congress and many of his fellow Republican governors. In fact, they put him squarely in the camp of Democrats, including President Clinton, who have been calling for many of the same measures for years. It is a familiar position for Mr. Pataki, who favors abortion rights and gay rights.

The Clinton administration has called on Congress to require background checks at gun shows and has proposed mandating ballistics fingerprinting, and legislation is being written by Democratic lawmakers, said Kristen Rand, the senior counsel for the Violence Policy Center, a gun control group. The gun control measure in the Congressional conference committee contains a trigger-lock provision, but gun control advocates say it is too weak.

Brian Morton, the spokesman for Handgun Control, said Mr. Pataki's proposals went beyond what most other states were considering this year and were important given that Mr. Pataki is a Republican. "Coming from a Republican governor this is revolutionary," Mr. Morton said. "This is an incredible, forward-looking step in law enforcement and crime control."

The governor's proposals, the first significant gun control legislation he has called for in his five years in office, will no doubt sail through the Democratic-controlled Assembly, which has passed the various elements of the Pataki plan at one time or another. "I welcome him aboard," the speaker of the Assembly, Sheldon Silver, said tonight of the governor.

The State Senate, where Repub-

licans hold the majority, has resisted gun control measures in the past, but in this election year, the majority leader, Joseph L. Bruno, has expressed a willingness to consider some measures, though he has not given any specifics. John McArdle, a spokesman for Mr. Bruno, would not comment on the governor's plans.

The most innovative part of the governor's plan would require that any new gun sold in New York be fired first, to record its "ballistic fingerprint," the pattern of nicks and scratches left on a bullet that is unique to each weapon. Such

markings are often used by the police and prosecutors to trace a crime to a particular gun, but first the gun must be found. Under Mr. Pataki's plan, the ballistics patterns of all new guns would go into a database that could be used for comparison with bullets found at crime scenes or in victims' bodies.

"At a crime scene, people don't leave the gun very often," the governor told ABC. "But they do leave bullets or shell casings."

The National Rifle Association has opposed taking ballistics samples for the government, contending that it would be a preliminary step toward national gun registration. Ronald Michon, the vice president of the New York State Rifle and Pistol association, the state affiliate of the N.R.A., said his organization would likely oppose the legislation. "They don't need any more legislation, they just need to enforce the ones that are on the books," he said. "They are throwing up a smokescreen for their own inadequacies at enforcing the laws."

Mr. Michon said the trigger lock legislation was inferior to a measure Mr. Pataki vetoed last year that would have taught an N.R.A. gun education program in state schools. "Trigger locks are unnecessary because it's proven they won't work," Mr. Michon said. "The state association has pushed to educate kids that you should not touch a gun."

Gun control has become one of the most contentious issues in Washington, and it promises to become a big part of the presidential campaign. Congressional Republicans have generally resisted gun control measures, though some measures, like requiring trigger locks with gun sales, enjoy broad support.

Last year, in the wake of the Columbine High School shooting in Colorado, each house of Congress passed its own measure that would, among other things, close the gun show loophole. But negotiators have made no progress toward reconciling the differences between the two bills. President Clinton has accused Congressional Republicans of intentionally stalling.

Each highly publicized school shooting like Columbine leads to a new round of legislative proposals for gun control, and new heights of popularity for those proposals.

Ms. Rand, of the Violence Policy Center, said that while the measures proposed by Mr. Pataki were important to improving law enforcement and gun safety, they might not do much to dent gun violence. "If you really want to decrease gun violence you have to regulate the gun industry in a more comprehensive way," Ms. Rand said. "And that is difficult at the state level."

The New York Times

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15, 2000

Giuliani Adds a Soft-Money Arm In Effort to Fight Fire With Fire

A

By CLIFFORD J. LEVY

Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani has set up a political committee to collect the largely unregulated donations known as soft money, and is asking supporters of his Senate candidacy to give as much as \$50,000 per couple to attend the committee's inaugural dinner next week.

The fund-raising arm, called the Giuliani Victory Committee, allows Mr. Giuliani to skirt the strict federal rules governing donations to his separate Senate campaign committee — a practice already embraced by his Democratic opponent, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

With both candidates now harvesting soft money from wealthy benefactors, the Senate race is likely to become a textbook example of how such contributions have rendered the Watergate-era system of limits increasingly ineffective. Soft money is supposed to be used for party activities, not specific candidates.

The official Senate committees run by candidates can receive a maximum of \$2,000 per person and cannot accept corporate contributions. Soft money committees, which are supervised by political parties, are bound by no such restrictions.

"The Giuliani Victory Committee CAN accept donations from BOTH personal AND corporate accounts without limit," states the invitation to the Giuliani fund-raising dinner, which is to be held on March 23 at Cello, a three-star restaurant in an Upper East Side town house.

The invitation says donors who pay \$50,000 a couple receive tickets to a reception, dinner and after-dinner drinks with the mayor. The reception and dinner alone is \$20,000 a couple, while it costs \$5,000 per person to attend just the reception.

Mrs. Clinton established a soft money committee last fall, and it has collected more than \$700,000, including individual donations up to \$80,000. Mr. Giuliani upbraided her in January for accepting the money, striving to link her to the fund-raising investigations of the Clinton administration, but said at the time that he would not rule out creating a similar committee.

"I learned a long time ago that you don't tie one hand behind your back," Mr. Giuliani said then.

"I believe you have to be competitive," he added. "I intend to get my message out. I intend to have enough money to do that, and the other campaign has already started using soft

money big time, without any penalty, without any stopping of it."

The new Giuliani committee, which was established last week, marks the latest escalation in fund-raising for what is expected to be the most expensive Senate race ever. Mr. Giuliani and Mrs. Clinton have already broken the record for fund-raising in the year before a Senate contest, with Mr. Giuliani taking in \$12 million for his official Senate committee and Mrs. Clinton collecting \$8 million for hers.

While Mrs. Clinton's soft money account is relatively small, and Mr. Giuliani's is nascent, both are expected to become more important nearer Election Day, when the two camps will be pouring money into television advertisements and seeking ways of raising large sums quickly in what is expected to be a tight race.

In response to questions about the new committee, Bruce J. Teitelbaum, the mayor's campaign manager, released a statement: "Given the enormous amounts of unethical fund-raising the Justice Department has allowed the Clintons to do, it's necessary for candidates to do this to achieve a level playing field, with this perfectly legal form of fund-raising."

In the invitation to the fund-raising dinner, Mr. Teitelbaum wrote, "We must overcome the tens of millions of dollars the Democratic Party, the big Labor Unions and the left-wing special interests will spend on her behalf."

Under the law, political parties are barred from spending soft money on efforts to aid specific candidates, and can use it only for items like voter drives or so-called issue advertisements, which spotlight a contender's views but do not urge people to vote in a particular way.

In reality, the line between soft and hard money has become more and more blurred, and federal regulators have been reluctant to crack down on the use of soft money to help candidates, which is why some politicians and advocacy groups have called for soft money to be abolished.

The leading champion of such a measure is Senator John McCain of Arizona, who made a soft money ban a pillar of his failed presidential campaign. Vice President Al Gore, the presumptive Democratic nominee, said last Saturday that he would also focus on a soft money ban; his Republican rival, Gov. George W. Bush of Texas, says he favors a ban on soft money donations by corporations and unions, but not by individuals.

Mr. Giuliani and Mrs. Clinton both support a complete ban, and their aides engaged in fruitless talks in January on ways of curbing soft money in the campaign. Each side accused the other of gamesmanship.

Mr. Giuliani set up the new committee, which will also collect what is known as hard dollars that can be used to help Mr. Giuliani directly, in conjunction with the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Stuart Roy, communications director for the senatorial committee, declined to estimate how much would be collected at the fund-raising dinner. He defended the establishment of the new committee, noting that under the law, the committee could not tell donors that the soft money would be used in New York, so it should not be seen as an effort to get around the donation limits.

"We do not earmark the contributions for a specific race," Mr. Roy said.

He said similar joint fund-raising committees had been created for the party's candidates in Missouri, Pennsylvania and Washington State.

While the senatorial committee will control the soft money and cannot legally promise that it will be used in New York, in practice it is understood that the money will make its way back to the state in the form of advertisements bought by the senatorial committee.

"This joint fund-raising committee will be helpful to our campaign effort and the N.R.S.C.'s efforts nationwide," the invitation to the March 23rd event states.

Campaigning in Albany yesterday, Mrs. Clinton defended her recent attendance at a fund-raiser for her Senate campaign sponsored by a group of Pakistani-Americans who wanted the president to visit Pakistan on his trip to South Asia, which begins on Saturday. The February event raised \$50,000. Last week, Mr. Clinton said he would make a brief stop in Pakistan.

Mrs. Clinton told reporters that the fund-raiser had nothing to do with the trip.

"The president made his decision based on what he thought was best for our country," Mrs. Clinton said.

She declined to say whether she spoke with the president about the trip.

"If anybody thinks they can influence the president by making contributions to me," she said, "they're dead wrong."

This is Jim Brady. This week we've seen the NRA say they're in favor of mandatory trigger lock sales with guns. That's news to me – they've been against it for years.

The NRA says they want people held responsible when children get hold of guns. That's funny. Just this week the NRA argued against a law that would do just that in Ohio.

They called it the "Burglar Protection Bill." And they opposed the same thing in South Carolina and Michigan too.

Charlton Heston says let's get tough on criminals with guns. Well, I was in Denver for the start of the anti-crime Project Exile program, and I didn't see him there. Maybe he was too busy.

The NRA has fought to give felons back their guns and to make illegal gun possession a misdemeanor.

And now they're trying to claim credit for background checks on gun buyers. I should know a little about that. After all, it's called the BRADY LAW, not the HESTON Law.

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March 13, 2000

Letters to the Editor
Chicago Tribune
Chicago, IL
Via Fax: 312/222-2598

Dear Editor:

The leadership of the National Rifle Association (NRA) has once again hit a new low. Wayne LaPierre, the NRA's Executive Vice President and national spokesperson, appeared on national television on Sunday to accuse the President of the United States of promoting violence. This is what he said about the President on ABC's This Week, "I've come to believe that he needs a certain level of violence in this country. He's willing to accept a certain level of killing to further his political agenda and his vice president too."

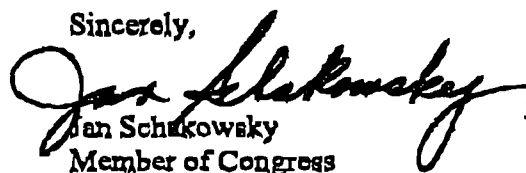
This preposterous and sick accusation is one of the most egregious charges ever leveled by the NRA's leadership. What is he going to do next -- accuse school grief counselors of inciting more school shootings so they can have more business?

In a fundraising letter in 1995, LaPierre described federal agents as "jack-booted government thugs" wearing "Nazi bucket helmets and black storm trooper uniforms to attack law-abiding citizens." At that time, President Bush turned in, and rightfully so, his lifetime membership card to the NRA in protest of LaPierre's letter.

I believe LaPierre has a lot of explaining to do to the NRA's three million members and to the American people.

Thirteen children die each day from gun violence. To their grieving parents, LaPierre is saying it's not the guns; it's the President. NRA members, I invite you to reject that nonsense, and instead join the President and the vast majority of Americans in support of common sense gun safety laws.

Sincerely,


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Support the Second Amendment -- the National Rifle Association Urges You to Vote "No" on the Lofgren Motion to Instruct Today!

Rep. Lofgren's motion to instruct demands a date certain deadline for the Juvenile Justice Conference Committee to begin deliberations on H.R. 1501. Yet at the same time, Rep. Lofgren is also demanding that the House Conferees accept nothing less than the Senate-passed version of H.R. 1501.

In a letter, of March 2nd, from Congressmen Gephardt and Bonior, and signed by Rep. Lofgren and other Members, to Senator Orrin Hatch, they demand the following "Such a conference report MUST include gun safety measures that are AT LEAST as strong as those passed by the Senate."

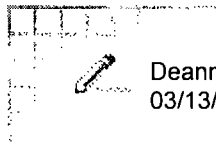
How can Rep. Lofgren expect the House conferees to agree to something that failed in the House twice already last June (McCarthy and Conyers amendments) and will fail again if brought up for a vote? Do they really want to help address the juvenile crime problem in this country or are they just politically posturing in an election year?

There is no reason to force a deadline other than to allow political grandstanding on issues that Members are already trying to resolve in good faith.

the National Rifle Association Urges You to Vote "No" Today on the Lofgren Motion To Instruct Conferees on H.R. 1501

TOTAL P.02

TOTAL P.01



Deanne E. Benos
03/13/2000 11:13:51 AM

Record Type: Record

To: Bruce N. Reed/OPD/EOP@EOP, Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP, Leanne A. Shimabukuro/OPD/EOP@EOP
cc: Anna Richter/OPD/EOP@EOP
Subject: Handgun Control's Response to NRA this weekend: THE BIG LIE(S)*.FROM THE NRA

TO: State Gun Control Activists
FROM: HCI State Legislation
DATE: March 13, 2000

The following press release went out yesterday.

THE BIG LIE(S)*.FROM THE NRA

(Washington, D.C.) In his appearance this morning on ABC's "This Week," National Rifle Association Executive Vice-President Wayne LaPierre told some whoppers that, even by the standards of his organization, strain the credulity of any American who has ever followed the gun control debate.

§ "The NRA created the Instant-Check system." As President Clinton pointed out, the NRA fought the Brady Bill - the proposal that eliminated prohibited purchases by background check and waiting period - for seven long years. Only after President Clinton's election, and with the support of his Administration, did passage of the Brady Law become a political possibility. And only then did the NRA offer an "instant-check" system as a substitute for the locally-administered background check and waiting period proposed by Brady. With the usual political haggling and threats from the gun lobby, the compounding of ingredients by a Congress longing for a compromise gave us the original Brady proposal for five years, which was replaced by the Instant-Check system on November 30, 1998. Thirty-four states now have no waiting period for new handgun purchases, putting public safety at risk from impulse homicides and suicides.

§ The NRA: the brave protector of innocent children. Wayne LaPierre claims that his organization supports holding gun-owners responsible for leaving guns accessible to children. There's a name for that: it's called a Child Access Protection law, which in 17 states has lowered the number of accidental deaths of children from firearms by an average of 23%. This is the law currently being proposed in Ohio, where the NRA just this week labeled it "the [Governor] Taft Burglar Protection Bill" and urged its members to "oppose any bill which attempts to dictate how law-abiding citizens should store their firearms." Last week, in its member blast-fax, the NRA congratulated pro-gun legislators in Georgia for opposing a CAP bill which "would have made you a criminal if a child were to gain unauthorized access to your firearms." As the NRA webpage noted on Friday, in Georgia, Michigan and South Carolina they opposed bills which would make it easier to prosecute and convict irresponsible gunowners whose guns are used by children to kill or injure others.

And oh, by the way, you'll have to look long and hard for the NRA's supposed "support" for the mandatory sale of trigger locks. They have consistently opposed this admittedly modest measure at both the Federal

and state level since it was first proposed, more than five years ago.

§ Let's just lock up those gun-toting criminals and throw away the key, or words to that effect. Like in Illinois, where the NRA is again fighting a state law which would make illegal firearms possession a felony instead of a misdemeanor. Or Utah, where the gun lobby fights a legislative attempt to 'deprive' violent misdemeanants of their ability to purchase a firearm. Or Florida, where the NRA filed an amicus brief supporting the right of a gang member standing on a corner NOT to be searched for the illegal weapon he was carrying. Or in the United States Congress, where every year the NRA searches for funding for the ATF to research and restore the 'gun rights' of convicted felons who want their weapons back.

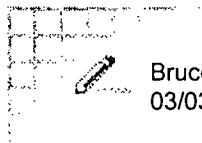
The Charlton Heston who now challenges President Clinton to a debate about "enforcement" is the same Charlton Heston who last week found himself too busy to share a platform with Jim Brady supporting Project Exile in Colorado. Why? Because the entire enforcement issue is a false choice: we can prosecute and convict gun-toting criminals and do everything possible to prevent them from getting guns in the first place. The NRA's enforcement red herring certainly smells fishy these days.

§ The NRA really wanted to pass that gun-control package bottled up in Congress. News to us. Handgun Control lobbyists saw more of NRA chief lobbyist James Jay Baker on the Hill last spring than they did their own mothers, and it never occurred to us that we were all after the same thing. Let's not rewrite history: Senator (and NRA Board Member) Larry Craig first got an amendment passed that actually broadened the gun-show loophole, and the NRA pulled in every chit to defeat the subsequently successful Lautenberg amendment, which closed it. The issue of taking 24 hours vs. 72 to check out gun-show purchasers whose records show a problem is not a meaningless debate. The way the NRA wants it, after 24 hours (on a weekend, most likely), if the instant-check cannot PROVE that the purchaser is prohibited, he happily gets his gun and goes on his way. This is not about waiting periods; this is about the five percent of purchasers whose records show problems and for whom research is needed. The NRA sure loves that five percent, enough to ensure that, as the NRA put it in its year-end report, "NRA's grassroots army prevailed upon the House of Representatives. While the Senate passed a version of Juvenile Justice Reform legislation (S. 254) containing the Lautenberg amendment, the House of Representatives stood fast and blocked similar legislation."

§ Suburban women are safe from guns*despite what Clinton/Gore say. The NRA's newfound interest in suburban women stems from its understanding that suburban women are the swing voting bloc for the 2000 elections. In Missouri last year, it was suburban voters who defeated the NRA's proposal to let virtually anyone carry a hidden handgun in the state. Just last week, suburban voters in California defeated a pro-gun Democrat, replacing him with Hilda Solis, who has led the gun-control charge in the California legislature.

Suburban women haven't forgotten that every school shooting, except in Michigan, occurred in suburban schools, at the hands of suburban kids with guns. But according to Wayne LaPierre, because one school shooting was committed by a child who lived in a crackhouse, now ALL the problems of youth violence are "inner city" and "drug-related." It's just those inner-city drug-dealers who are putting suburban women at risk*.classic NRA rhetoric to try to divide and conquer, and to persuade average Americans that gun violence couldn't possibly touch their lives. But after watching kids shoot and kill other kids, all Americans have been touched by gun violence. The NRA's greatest fear is that the American people, especially the swing voters, will make support for stricter gun laws a voting issue. This November, the NRA's greatest fear will be realized.

The NRA obviously believes that most Americans, including the national press, can be easily duped. But all the message-training that money can buy will not make people forget that the NRA is, in the words of that lefty liberal publication Fortune Magazine, "a pariah even among some of its friends." Shame on the NRA for its latest attack ads, shame on them for their hypocrisy, and shame on them for believing Americans to be stupid enough to believe the big lies.



Bruce N. Reed
03/03/2000 09:32:40 AM

Record Type: Record

To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message

cc: Eric P. Liu/OPD/EOP@EOP

Subject: Let's go after this today too

NRA Spoofs Clinton, 'Get Smart'
To Decry Smart Gun Research

© National Journal Group Inc.
Wednesday, Feb. 2, 2000

The National Rifle Association has been running radio ads in Washington, D.C., and other "targeted markets" saying President Clinton's plan to fund smart gun research is unnecessary and that the focus should be on enforcing existing laws.

The 60-second spots, produced by Edmonds Associates, feature a President Clinton impersonator, who wants "high-tech gizmos" to keep guns away from criminals. One ad also parodies the television show "Get Smart," and Agent 86 says Clinton's plan "doesn't sound very smart to me."

The ads say Clinton wants to spend \$10 million on research for smart guns, which the NRA calls "untested, unproven technology." They have been running for a few months in a series of changing spots.

The NRA also ran television commercials in October encouraging the enforcement of existing laws rather than new ones.

Ad Spotlight has the latest issue/advocacy spots, plus ads from Election 2000 candidates.

Script of "Mad Scientist" (Radio)

ANNOUNCER: Deep inside the White House laboratory, scientists work furiously to develop a smart gun.

BILL CLINTON: All right, you. I gave you \$10 million to develop this thing. Now show me how it

works!

SCIENTIST: Well, Mr. President, first you get a decoder ring, then select the frequency punching your number in the ... oh! Blast. Sorry. It was working a month ago.

CLINTON: You mean this thing isn't foolproof? Oh, there's gotta be a better way.

JIM BAKER: This is Jim Baker of the National Rifle Association. Sometimes the best way is the simplest way.

Bill Clinton wants to spend 10 million taxpayer dollars on so-called smart gun research -- guns that are supposed to not function unless the operator is authorized to fire it. But untested, unproven technology is no substitute for old-fashioned common sense. Enforcing our existing gun laws and promoting responsible gun ownership is the best way to keep guns out of the wrong hands.

SCIENTIST: Please be careful where you point that thing, Mr. President. (Yelps) You could hurt someone.

CLINTON: Sorry about that.

ANNOUNCER: Paid for by the National Rifle Association. Celebrity voices impersonated.

Script of "Smart On Smart" (Radio)

ANNOUNCER: Agents 99 and 86 on the case.
Assignment: develop a smart gun. First up, the White House.

BILL CLINTON: Come on in! Hey, you figured out my \$10 million smart gun yet?

AGENT 86: We're working on it, sir. But first we've got a few questions.

CLINTON: Shoot! I mean, what do you want to know?

AGENT 86: Well, just exactly what is a smart gun and why do we need them?

CLINTON: Well, it's high-tech -- you know, some high-tech gizmo. Secret codes. Lasers or something to keep criminals from shooting guns.

AGENT 86: Wouldn't it be easier to keep criminals

from using guns by keeping criminals in jail?

CLINTON: Well, I'm a high-tech kind of guy. Don't tell me you're trying to make this a choice between high-tech and common sense.

AGENT 86: Doesn't sound very smart to me, 99.

AGENT 99: It isn't, 86.

AGENT 86: I better phone this in to the chief right away. Where's my shoe phone?

AGENT 99: On your foot, 86.

AGENT 86: Right.

ANNOUNCER: Tell Congress to spend tax dollars on enforcement of existing gun laws, not on untested, unproven technology. Call 202-225-3121. 202-225-3121.

Paid for by the National Rifle Association. Celebrity voices impersonated.

Message Sent To:

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