

NLWJC - Kagan

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Crime - Gun Bill 1999

April 28, 1999

The Hon. Henry Hyde
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you know, yesterday I unveiled a comprehensive proposal to strengthen our federal firearms laws in four important ways: by (1) expanding the successful Brady Law; (2) further restricting youth access to guns; (3) cracking down on illegal gun traffickers; and (4) strengthening the ban on assault weapons. In the coming days, I will transmit this legislation to Congress. I believe that Congress should be able to pass within weeks or months everything in this legislation, which builds on efforts that have proved highly effective in keeping guns out of the hands of criminals and youth. Consider some of the bill's specific provisions:

My legislation will extend Brady background checks to all gun show sales, as well as to the purchase of explosives. Justice Department studies show that Brady background checks have stopped hundreds of thousands of illegal handgun sales. Extension of the background check requirement to gun shows and explosives will strengthen our ability to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of criminals.

My legislation will raise the age of the current youth handgun ban from 18 to 21 years of age. With ATF gun trace data showing that more crime guns are traced to 18 and 19 year-olds than to any other age group, this proposal is an obvious way of reducing gun violence across the country.

My bill will also ban youth possession (again, until the age of 21) of all semiautomatic assault rifles and large capacity ammunition clips with more than 10 rounds of ammunition. In 1994, you and other Republicans stood up to the gun lobby and supported the original ban on assault weapons, which applied to newly manufactured weapons. My legislation will prevent juveniles from owning these weapons regardless of the date of manufacture.

And my legislation will limit handgun sales to no more than one per month per person, so that gun runners, hiding behind straw purchasers, cannot buy handguns in bulk and divert them to the street. It will also help law enforcement to trace more crime guns to their source, and to crack down on gun dealers involved in illegal gun trafficking.

For more than six years, we have made great progress in reducing gun-related crime and violence in America. In fact, the number of violent crimes committed with guns has dropped by more than 25 percent during that time. Gun violence, however, remains a serious problem in our nation, and much more needs to be done. Passing comprehensive firearms legislation is one

thing we can and must do to address this important issue. I ask that you bring these common-sense measures to a vote as quickly as possible.