

# Many G.O.P. Governors Now Pushing for Greater Gun Control

By MICHAEL JANOFSKY

DENVER, Sept. 3 — As each new high-profile shooting roils the national debate over gun ownership rights, advocates for greater gun control are winning a measure of support from Republican governors, an unlikely source.

After several shootings in recent years, including the mass shooting at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., more than four months ago, almost a third of the nation's 31 Republican Governors have taken positions to strengthen gun control in their states.

Most of these Governors, including Bill Owens of Colorado and Bob Taft of Ohio, were strongly endorsed in their last campaign by the National Rifle Association, which generally favors Republicans over Democrats and stronger enforcement of existing gun laws rather than the passage of new ones.

But as the dialogue over gun ownership slowly expands from arguments over the Second Amendment to include consideration of public health and safety, a growing number of the Republican governors have found solutions closer to the political center — even as Congress has been unable to agree on any new Federal gun measures.

Responding to constituents, the governors have vetoed legislation that would allow people to carry concealed weapons and have won or pushed for laws that would require trigger locks, make parents and other adults responsible for minors' use of their guns and toughen sentences for crimes committed with guns.

While some governors have defied Republican lawmakers in their own state legislatures to get measures passed, modest new laws — primarily dealing with public safety — have won support from both sides of the gun debate, including the N.R.A., which favors laws that keep guns out of the hands of children, people with mental disorders and people with a criminal background, and Handgun Control Inc., a leading advocate for more restrictive measures.

"Columbine opened a new era in the gun debate," said Gov. Michael O. Leavitt of Utah, a second-term Republican who has fought with his state's Republican-controlled Legislature for tighter gun control, including a measure to prohibit concealed weapons in schools.

"We're starting to get a sense of proportion," Governor Leavitt added. "There is a capacity to protect Second Amendment rights, but that does not mean we can't limit the way guns are used. That dialogue is starting to go on."

It is evident across the country. In Illinois, a package of public safety initiatives signed into law this year by Gov. George Ryan, a first-

term Republican, included mandatory trigger locks on guns to prevent child access, a gun storage law that holds parents accountable for acts of violence committed with a gun by their children, and new penalties for using guns in crimes, including an automatic 15 years added to the prison term of someone who brandishes a gun while committing a felony. The

## An issue becomes a matter of public health and safety.

penalty rises to 20 more years if the gun is fired, and 25 years to life if someone is shot.

Mr. Ryan, who had the support of Handgun Control in his victorious 1998 campaign against Glenn Poshard, a Democrat, also said he would veto any bill that would allow Illinois residents to carry a concealed weapon. Thirty other states have such laws.

In Kansas, Gov. Bill Graves, a second-term Republican, vetoed a bill in 1997 that would have allowed state residents to carry concealed weapons.

Republican lawmakers, who are a strong majority in both the Kansas

House and Senate, have not passed a similar measure since.

This year Governor Graves signed into law a measure he proposed last year that provides stricter punishment, including the loss of driving privileges, for students who take weapons into schools.

In Ohio, where Republicans also control both houses, Mr. Taft, a Republican who is a first-term Governor, has refused to endorse any concealed-handgun bill that does not have the support of the state's law-enforcement agencies. So far, no bill has reached his desk.

In Massachusetts, where both houses of the Legislature are overwhelmingly Democratic, Gov. Paul Cellucci, a Republican, signed into law last year a sweeping package of initiatives that included a ban on assault weapons, increases in fines and prison terms for gun-related crimes and a prohibition against gun dealers selling weapons from their residences.

This year Mr. Cellucci introduced legislation that would impose stiffer penalties against anyone who shot a gun at a car or at a house, school or other building.

Among other Republican Governors, Marc Racicot of Montana this year vetoed a measure that would have allowed anyone carrying a concealed gun to enter a bar or a restaurant that sells alcoholic beverages.

Gov. Tommy G. Thompson of Wisconsin has vowed to veto any con-

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# As Pressure Builds, Reno Appears Calm

By MELINDA HENNEBERGER

WASHINGTON, Sept. 3 — At this morning's weekly press briefing, Attorney General Janet Reno answered virtually every question by saying she was "dedicated to finding the truth," wanted to "use the process to get to the truth" and planned to "continue to pursue the truth."

In half an hour, she referred to the truth a total of 25 times.

Again, reporters were asking whether Ms. Reno would resign over the latest disclosures about the 1993 fire at the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Tex., where about 80 people died. And again, in response, she spoke softly, smiled pleasantly, and said very little. In answer to the last question of the day about the continuing confusion over what happened at the compound, she said, "I think we'll let the truth speak."

Republicans have criticized Ms. Reno, saying she never even got close to digging out the truth on the Branch Davidian case or on possible campaign-finance abuses by Administration officials, including Mr. Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. They were infuriated by her decisions not to name special prosecutors to get to the bottom of those accusations.

And many conservatives felt that Ms. Reno's initial statement after the debacle near Waco that "the buck stops here" was not only an inadequate answer to the loss of many lives but became a substitute for a thorough investigation.

Ms. Reno has also drawn criticism from Democrats, who have complained that she was too willing to appoint special counsels to look into accusations against Cabinet members, including Henry A. Cisneros, Mike Espy and Bruce Babbitt, and gave a green light to Kenneth W. Starr to expand his investigation of Whitewater to include the Lewinsky scandal. Democrats also seem frustrated by Ms. Reno's repeated insistence in times of crisis that while she is ultimately responsible, she is also often out of the loop, misinformed or, as she suggested last week, deceived by her own people.

"She's doing a hard job," said a

former Justice Department official. "The Clintonites don't like that she gave Ken Starr a blank check."

And Ms. Reno, because of her reserve and refusal to schmooze, is perceived as being out on a limb.

"Periodically, they come and ask for her resignation," Donna E. Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, said of critics of Ms. Reno, who is her friend. "The insiders feel she doesn't have a constituency because she's not a member of the legal establishment. The boys in town, Democrats and Republicans, see a constituency as only in the Beltway, but the American people like her. They see her as an Abe Lincoln figure."

Ms. Reno's anguished acceptance

## The disaster near Waco has drawn critics on all sides.

of responsibility after the Branch Davidian fire did earn her high marks for honesty, at least in some quarters. But, critics say, her assurances that she is still in charge, still digging, still determined to get to the truth seem to be wearing thin.

"She is a weak Attorney General, and that is one Cabinet position in which it's actually important to know what you're doing," said Bill Kristol, editor of the conservative Weekly Standard. "Republicans are going to beat her up, and she deserves it."

Mr. Kristol went on to say that conservatives were so fed up with Ms. Reno that they were relatively uncritical of Director Louis J. Freeh of the F.B.I. simply because he was perceived as anti-Reno.

Ms. Reno was not Mr. Clinton's first choice for the job, or his second; he considered other women, including Zoë Baird and Kimba Wood. Ms. Reno was not a Presidential friend, as many attorneys general have been, and since moving to Washing-

ton from Florida, where she was the Dade County prosecutor, she has kept mostly to herself, socializing with a handful of friends, most of them visitors from Florida.

Under fire almost from the first, Ms. Reno entered office while the standoff with the Branch Davidian followers of David Koresh was under way. And her tenure has not been an easy one. After ordering the attack, which was supposed to force the Branch Davidians out of their compound but instead led to their deaths, Ms. Reno said that making that call had been "the hardest decision in the world to make" and was "based on what we knew then."

"Based on what we know now," she said immediately after the attack, "it was obviously wrong."

Ms. Reno was again forced to acknowledge that her credibility had been damaged after the disclosure a week ago that agents had used heat-generating tear-gas rounds — which they had always denied using — not far from the main Branch Davidian compound several hours before the deadly fire began. Yesterday, Ms. Reno ordered United States marshals to seize a previously undisclosed tape recording of conversations between F.B.I. commanders and field agents on the morning of the tear-gas assault.

But today, though her hands and arms were shaking because of her Parkinson's disease, Ms. Reno seemed placid, even unfazed.

"You dig at it until you get it right and you get people telling you what actually happened," she said. "You don't run away from it. You don't say, 'Oh, me. I can't handle this.' You keep at it until you get to the truth."

Friends say the calm is real. "She doesn't take it personally," said Ms. Shalala, who added that she had never heard Ms. Reno question why she was so often under attack.

Or, as another friend, the former Justice Department official, put it: "She just doesn't embarrass. There's been a lot of personal vitriol, and I never saw it bother her. She doesn't play the Washington game or have a lot of Washington friends. She's totally on her own island."

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cealed-weapon bill.

Gov. Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey says she supports mandatory child-proof locks for guns.

And Gov. John G. Rowland of Connecticut signed into law this year a measure that allows the authorities to remove guns from the homes of people believed to be a threat to the community.

"The governors are responding to their constituents," said Joe Sudbay, director of state legislation for Handgun Control, who contends that two of the most recent shootings of children, at Columbine High and at the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles last month, energized people around the country as no events before.

James J. Baker, chief lobbyist for the National Rifle Association, said the association supported the governors' efforts as "common-sense proposals that the shrieking of the media have drowned out" in focusing on gun-related issues in purely Second Amendment terms.

"It's a more complicated debate than that," Mr. Baker said, adding that the rifle association supported sensible measures that both sides could agree on, like trigger locks and pilot programs like Project Exile, in which cities prosecute gun violations in Federal courts, where penalties are stiffer than in state courts.

"There are areas of law where we can find a lot of common good," Mr. Baker said.

Perhaps no two Republican Governors have encountered more opposition in pushing through new measures than Mr. Owens in Colorado and Mr. Leavitt in Utah.

In April, when the Columbine High shootings occurred, the Colorado Legislature was preparing to pass a package of gun initiatives, including one that would have made it easier for more state residents to carry a concealed weapon and another that would grant gun manufacturers immunity from lawsuits. After the shootings, the concealed-weapons bill was pulled, and the Governor vetoed the immunity measure.

Since the shootings, the Governor has advocated measures that would hold parents accountable for the use of guns they own, require sales at gun shows to include the same background checks as sales in retail stores, and raise the minimum age for sales at gun shows to 21 from 18.

A more recent shooting, in which a man killed his three daughters, prompted Governor Owens to order the Colorado Bureau of Investigation to conduct background checks on all gun sales to pick up state and local concerns that the standard Federal check might miss.

For those efforts, Mr. Owens has drawn fire from several gun organizations in the state. The Rocky Mountain Gun Owners group calls him "Governor Gun Control," and the Colorado State Shooting Association, an affiliate of the N.R.A., has vowed to defeat the measures when the Legislature returns in January.

In Utah, fatal shootings this year in two Salt Lake City buildings prompted Governor Leavitt to propose amending the state's law on concealed weapon to prohibit sales to people with mental disorders and those with violent criminal backgrounds, and to prohibit the carrying of concealed weapons in schools. Among states that allow concealed weapons, Utah is the only one where guns are permitted in schools.

Despite several statewide polls that showed Utah residents overwhelmingly oppose the right to carry guns into schools, Republican lawmakers fought Mr. Leavitt on each initiative before agreeing to consider two of the three measures when the Legislature meets in January; they have vowed to defeat any effort to bar concealed weapons from schools.

A coalition of civic organizations is now collecting signatures to put the school question to voters in the November 2000 elections.

Opposition to the measure has left the Governor scratching his head.

"It's frustrating," Mr. Leavitt said. "This is not about the Second Amendment. It's about the use of guns and balancing the rights of a few against the rights of a large community that just wants to feel safe in its environment."

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## With 25 States Unable to Agree on Clean Air Pact, Issue Is Left for Courts to Resolve

By RICHARD PÉREZ-PEÑA

ALBANY, Sept. 3 — Twenty-five states have given up trying to negotiate a settlement in their dispute over pollution that blows into the Northeast from the Midwest and South, meaning that the issue will be resolved in court, state officials said today.

As 11 Northeast states from Maryland to Maine try to comply with the Clean Air Act, they have been trying to force 14 Middle Western and Southern states to sharply reduce emissions of nitrogen oxides. The United States Environmental Protection Agency took the side of the Northeast states, but after suffering some setbacks in court, it pressed

the states to negotiate a deal.

But this week, states on both sides rejected out of hand the first proposed compromise. Today, officials acknowledged that the talks, barely begun, were over.

"We thought it would be a worthwhile process to see if there could be any common ground, but unfortunately, there's not," said John P. Cahill, New York's Environmental Conservation Commissioner, who had been the lead negotiator for the Northeast states. "It's now a continued vigorous pursuit of the litigation."

In a series of conference calls yesterday, just 4 of the 14 states in the other camp were willing to accept

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### *No compromise with the Northeast over emissions from the Midwest and South.*

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the compromise, a fact that was relayed to Mr. Cahill this morning. It was not clear how many of the Northeast states might accept it, but Massachusetts had said it would not, and others expressed deep reservations. State and Federal officials had said that a negotiated deal could work

only if all 25 states agreed to it.

Summertime levels of ozone, or smog, in several urban areas in the Northeast, including New York City and its suburbs, exceed Federal standards. To comply with the Clean Air Act, the Northeast states are trying to curtail their levels of nitrogen oxides, a chemical group that contributes to the formation of ozone and acid rain.

All of the Northeast states plan to adopt a new emissions standard of 0.15 pounds of nitrogen oxides per million British thermal units of power consumed, and they have asked the Environmental Protection Agency to impose the same standard on the Midwest and the South. They

contend that much of the Northeast's pollution problem arrives on the prevailing winds from the other regions, a claim that Midwestern and Southern states contest.

But the states of the Midwest and South have said they cannot accept any requirement lower than 0.25 pounds, which would represent a significant emissions reduction. Last week's compromise proposal would have required an initial 0.25 standard, dropping later to 0.2.

The E.P.A. announced last year that it planned to impose the 0.15 standard sought by the Northeast, but some of the other states went to court to block it. In May, the United States Court of Appeals for the Dis-

trict of Columbia postponed implementation of that plan, pending a hearing that is set for November.

Environmental agency officials grew nervous about their chances in court and pushed the states to work out a deal on their own.

If the E.P.A. fails in court, the Northeast states still have the ability to pursue their own lawsuits under the Clean Air Act, and Mr. Cahill stressed that they had not ruled out that possibility.

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# Clinton Urges Gun Law Changes

By SANDRA SOBIERAJ  
c The Associated Press

Crime -  
Guns -  
Republicans

WASHINGTON (April 27) - President Clinton pressed for new controls on guns Tuesday, and top Republicans proposed a hard look at the nation's violence-tinged culture as the two parties offered different responses to last week's Colorado high school shootings.

"People's lives are at stake here," Clinton declared at the White House. He urged the GOP-controlled Congress to raise from 18 to 21 the legal age for handgun possession and to hold negligent parents liable when their children use guns to commit crimes.

By day's end, Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., had agreed to give Democrats an opportunity for a debate and vote on firearms proposals in about two weeks. Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois pronounced Lott's decision "a breakthrough" ~~toward passage of legislation, and several advocates of tougher gun laws said they thought they could prevail.~~

Earlier, neither Lott nor House Speaker Dennis Hastert mentioned gun control as they called jointly for a "National Conference on Youth and Culture."

"This conference should examine important issues facing students and society, including video games, drugs in school, Hollywood, prayer in schools, parental involvement and local control of schools," Hastert, R-Ill., said in a written statement.

Neither Hastert nor Lott, who appeared together at a middle school in Virginia to tout recently passed education legislation, offered details.

Back inside the Capitol, Lott spoke dismissively of the call for new gun-control legislation as a "typical knee-jerk reaction." The issues raised by last week's shooting at the Columbine High School outside Denver are "bigger than just a gun debate," he said.

At the same time, he appeared to leave open the door to some type of restrictions, mentioning a measure calling for child safety locks on firearms.

Several Democrats said they are counting on the horror of the Colorado shooting to fundamentally change the political landscape.

"My guess is that the climate has changed," said Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

First at the White House, and then in the Capitol, the nation's political leaders paused during the day to observe a moment of silence for the victims of the shooting rampage. It was a week ago that 12 students and a teacher died at the hands of two heavily armed students, who ended the carnage by turning their weapons on themselves.

The brief silence since then was an interlude to the political jockeying that broke out Tuesday on an issue that had faded into the background in recent years. Republicans, heavily funded by the National Rifle Association, have traditionally opposed gun control legislation. Democrats have shied away from forcing votes on the question in recent years, in part to spare members of their rank and file from Western and Southern states from having to make politically unpalatable choices.

At the White House, Clinton said his proposals would amount to no more than minor delays and minor hassles for sportsmen and legal gun owners.

"It's going to be a hassle for them. It's worth it. It's worth it. We're sorry - it's worth it," the president said. "People's lives are at stake here."

He added: "So it's not just the culture of violence that has to change. It's the culture of hunting and sport shooting that has to stop financing efforts to frighten their members who are good, God-fearing, law-abiding, taxpaying citizens out there, into believing that every time we try to save a kid's life, it's a camel's nose in the tent."