

**PRESIDENT CLINTON TO PARTICIPATE IN LAUNCHING
MARYLAND'S LANDMARK NEW GUN SAFETY LAW
April 11, 2000**

Today President Clinton will visit Annapolis, Maryland, where Governor Parris Glendening will sign common-sense gun safety legislation that will require built-in child safety locks on handguns, ballistics testing for newly manufactured handguns to help solve more gun crimes, and safety training for gun purchasers. The visit will call attention to the growing number of states that are enacting new laws to prevent gun violence. The President will also underscore the importance of strong national gun laws, and urge Congress to follow the lead of states such as Maryland by putting the interests of American families above those of the gun lobby and passing the common sense gun safety legislation that has been stalled for over nine months.

HIGHLIGHTING STATE PROGRESS TOWARD COMMON SENSE GUN LAWS.

Maryland joins a growing number of States that are making guns safer and keeping guns out of the wrong hands. In Massachusetts, regulations requiring that all handguns sold in the state meet quality and safety standards including child-proofing features, tamper-proof serial numbers and consumer safety warnings have taken effect. In Colorado, citizens are working to push a ballot initiative to close the gun show loophole that has the support of 83 percent of the voters. Meanwhile, 68 cities and local governments across the country are taking efforts to support manufacturers that adopt safe gun and dealers responsibility standards.

UNDERSCORING THE NEED FOR STRONG NATIONAL GUN SAFETY LAWS.

While states are making important progress to reduce gun violence, national gun safety legislation is still needed. A patchwork of inconsistent state gun laws allows criminals to obtain guns by exploiting loopholes in states with weaker laws to commit crimes in states with stronger laws. And, Congress can pass lifesaving new gun laws far more quickly than all 50 states. That is why the President today will again call on Congress to pass common sense gun legislation requiring background checks at gun shows, mandating child safety locks for handguns, banning the importation of large capacity ammunition clips, and barring violent juveniles from owning guns for life. Last year, the Senate passed strong gun safety measures, with Vice President Gore's critical tie-breaking vote, on an amendment to close the gun show loophole. However, the Republican leadership has allowed this life-saving legislation to languish for over 9 months – despite bipartisan House and Senate votes in the last few weeks in favor of taking prompt action to move forward on gun legislation and the underlying juvenile justice bill. The President will call on Congress to follow the lead of States like Maryland and pass common-sense legislation by April 20, the one-year anniversary of the Columbine tragedy.

PAVING THE WAY FOR LIFESAVING GUN LEGISLATION. Below is a sample of common-sense gun measures proposed or already in force in states and communities across the country:

Child Safety Lock Laws. Last year, the Senate passed legislation to require child safety locks to be sold with every new handgun. Six states have laws requiring child safety locks or trigger locks: Connecticut, Massachusetts, California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Maryland is the first state to pass a law requiring "integrated" locks onto handguns.

Ballot Initiatives. In addition to legislation, some states will consider gun proposals through statewide referenda this year. Utah will consider a ballot initiative to ban concealed weapons from churches and schools. Colorado and Oregon will consider ballot to close the gun show loophole and require background checks on all sales at gun shows.

Local Gun Buybacks. Communities across the country have engaged in local gun buybacks to take guns out of circulation and prevent gun violence, including New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. Thanks to a \$15 million gun buyback program launched by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) last year, nearly 80 public housing authorities across the country have committed to conducting buybacks with local law enforcement.

Local Procurement Power to Promote Responsible Industry Practices. A total of 68 cities, counties, and State Attorneys General have agreed, in their law enforcement gun purchases, to support gun manufacturers that adopt safe gun and dealer responsibility standards. Communities that have made this pledge include San Francisco; Los Angeles; Bridgeport, CT; District of Columbia; Atlanta; Gary, IN; New Orleans; Boston; Detroit and Flint, MI; St. Louis; Albany and Buffalo, NY; Philadelphia; and Richmond, VA.

California

In 1999 California enacted a comprehensive set of new gun safety laws. These include new safety standards banning the sale of "junk guns," and a new law requiring that all guns be sold with child safety locks. Last year the state also enacted new laws limiting handgun purchases to 1 per person per month and passed the most expansive assault weapon laws in the country. California also requires a waiting period of 10 days for any firearm, registers assault weapons and maintains records of handgun transfers. California child access prevention laws make it a crime to leave a loaded weapon within reach or easy access of a child under 16. This year, the State Assembly also approved legislation requiring gun buyers to demonstrate they can safely operate the weapons.

Since 1992, violent crime in California has dropped by 25 percent and firearm-related deaths are down by 26 percent.

Connecticut

Connecticut requires gun purchasers to complete a safety-training course and receive a permit to purchase a handgun. Dealers must offer trigger locks for sale at the time of purchase. The state registers firearms, including information about both the buyer and seller. The minimum age for possession of a handgun is 21. Connecticut has child access prevention laws making it a felony to leave a loaded firearm within easy access of a child under 16. Connecticut recently barred issuing handgun permits to persons convicted of serious juvenile offenses.

Since 1992, violent crime rates have fallen by 21 percent in Connecticut and the number of firearm-related deaths is down by nearly 31 percent.

Florida

Florida places a 3-day waiting period for the purchase of handguns. In 1998, Florida voters passed a constitutional revision allowing counties to require background checks and waiting periods for gun show sales. In 1989, Florida was the first state in the country to pass a child access prevention law making it a crime to leave a loaded firearm within the reach or easy access of a child under 16 years old.

Since 1992, the violent crime rate in Florida has dropped by 8 percent and the number of firearm-related deaths is down by over 10 percent.

Hawaii

Hawaii requires gun purchasers to complete a safety-training course and receive a permit to purchase any firearm. Handguns are required to meet certain safety and performance standards in order to be sold. Hawaii law sets the minimum age for possession of a handgun at 21. Hawaii also has the broadest child access prevention laws in the nation that make it illegal to leave a firearm, whether loaded or unloaded, within the reach or easy access of a child under 16 years old. All firearms in Hawaii must be registered. This year, the Hawaii Senate also passed a bill that would include a gun owner's ID card system and require the re-registration of all firearms. The House would require all registered firearm owners to provide their local chief of police with a list of all firearms currently in their possession.

The firearms-related death rate in Hawaii is more than seven points below the national rate. The number of firearms-related deaths has dropped by 37 percent since 1994.

Maryland

Maryland has a seven-day waiting period for handgun purchases and limits handgun purchases to one per month. The state police maintain permanent transaction records of all sales. The minimum age for possession of a handgun is 21 and it is a misdemeanor to leave a loaded gun within reach or easy access of a child under 16 years old. Handguns sold in Maryland are required to meet safety and performance standards that ban the sales of "junk guns." This year, the Maryland Legislature has passed and Governor Glendening will sign a bill that requires built-in child safety locks on handguns, ballistics testing for newly manufactured handguns to help solve more gun crimes, and safety training for gun purchasers.

Since 1992, the violent crime rate in Maryland has dropped by 12 percent and the number of firearm-related deaths is down by 6 percent.

Massachusetts

New Massachusetts regulations require all handguns sold in the state to meet quality and safety standards including child-proof features, tamper-proof serial numbers and consumer safety warnings. In addition, in 1998 the state passed quality standards that ban the sale of "junk guns" and access prevention laws that make it illegal to leave a firearm unless it is equipped with a

tamper-resistant safety device or is stored in a securely locked container. Massachusetts also increased the minimum age for purchase of a handgun to 21. In order to purchase any firearm, a buyer must first get a Firearm Identification Card (FID) and all rifles, shotguns and firearms purchased in the state must be registered. New residents must also register firearms.

Since 1992, the violent crime rate in Massachusetts has declined by 16 percent and the number of firearm-related deaths is down by 24 percent.

New Jersey

New Jersey requires gun buyers to obtain a permit and requires that child safety locks be sold with all guns. Handguns must also be registered at the point of purchase. New Jersey law prevents storing a loaded firearm within reach or easy access of a child under 16 years old.

Since 1992, the violent crime rate in New Jersey is down 19 percent and the number of firearm-related deaths is down by 3 percent.

[Sources: FBI 1992 and 1997 Uniform Crime Index; Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 7/99; Bureau of Justice Statistics, Survey of State Procedures Related to Firearm Sales, 3/2000]

Guns -
States

Mass. to Enforce Toughest Handgun Rules in U.S.

By PAMELA FERDINAND
Special to The Washington Post

BOSTON, April 3—The Massachusetts attorney general today announced that his office will begin using its consumer protection authority to enforce the most comprehensive handgun safety regulations in the nation, banning the sale of cheap handguns and requiring all handguns sold in the state to have safety devices that keep children from firing them.

The long-delayed regulations, which go into effect immediately, essentially govern firearms the same as any consumer product, from hair dryers and toasters to automobiles. They ban the sale of "Saturday Night Specials" and require all handguns sold in Massachusetts to include built-in child-proofing devices, tamper-resistant serial numbers and safety warnings similar to those found on cigarette packs.

The new rules also prohibit the sale of handguns without state-approved trigger locks and, for semiautomatic handguns, devices that indicate whether a gun is loaded. Suppliers are further required to explain to customers how to safely handle and store handguns and use safety devices.

Starting today, state officials and investigators will begin inspecting about 700 federally licensed gun dealers in Massachusetts and will issue warnings against the sale of any guns that do not comply with the tough new standards. Violators will be subject to a civil penalty of up to a \$5,000 fine for each violation, loss of their license to sell firearms and possible additional charges.

"If they want to do business in Massachusetts, they have to play by our rules—rules that emphasize safety," said Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly, flanked by several state representatives and gun-control advocates at an afternoon press conference. "We're imposing these regulations, and we're going to enforce them right now. They are not going to have any time. Not a day."

With the gun industry specifically exempted by Congress from federal Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines, gun control advocates said enforcement of the restrictions in Massachusetts under state law will add a significant new dimension to the ongoing gun control debate should other attorneys general follow suit, as expected.

The gun industry already has suffered several setbacks. Thirty cities and counties in 20 states have sued gun manufacturers and dealers. And tonight, Maryland legislators were expected to give final approval to a bill that would make the state the first in the nation to require built-in locks on all new handguns.

Springfield, Mass.-based Smith & Wesson Corp.—the nation's largest and oldest handgun manufacturer—recently agreed to implement certain safety measures in exchange for several lawsuits being dropped.

"These regulations are precedent-setting," said Dennis Henigan, legal director for the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence in Washington. "It's possible if enough states do this, the effect will be to impose national standards."

John Rosenthal, founder and chairman of Stop Handgun Violence in Massachusetts, agreed. "The attorneys general and the courts can do what Congress has neglected to do, which is simply regulate guns like any other dangerous product," he said. "We wouldn't consider selling cars without seat belts or headlights. Why do we allow the gun industry to be unregulated?"

The National Rifle Association in Washington declined to comment and referred a reporter to the Gun Owners' Action League in Northboro, Mass. An official of the Action League, which is the equivalent of the state firearms association, called the attorney general's announcement a "politically motivated and unnecessary level of bureaucratic intrusion." In a prepared statement, the Action League also accused Reilly of sending out a message that poor and minority citizens do not have a right to self-defense in Massachusetts. Education,

not regulation, is the answer, it said.

"The truth is that firearms accidents are at the lowest number since 1903, despite the fact that the population and the number of guns have increased more than fourfold," the organization said. "Political posturing has yet to reduce gun accidents."

Ken Jorgensen, a spokesman for Smith & Wesson, said the manufacturer anticipates that most, if not all, of its products will be compliant, pending further review of the final regulations. Whether other firearms manufactured and sold by Massachusetts companies and dealers will comply with the standards remains to be seen.

While newly being enforced, the regulations have been on the books here for a few years.

They were issued in 1997—one year

before Massachusetts legislators passed the nation's strictest gun control law, which includes many similar quality and safety provisions. Their implementation was held up by legal challenges from the gun industry, however, until the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled last year that former Attorney General Scott Harshbarger had not overstepped his authority by issuing them under consumer protection laws.

A final judgment earlier this year by a state Superior Court judge upheld the regulations and gave the gun industry until March 20 to appeal. The industry failed to meet that deadline, opening the way for Reilly to pursue enforcement of the regulations for the first time in three years.

As part of his enforcement effort, Reilly said he will order independent perfor-

mance testing of firearms. Investigators will conduct sting operations on dealers they suspect are ignoring customer warning requirements or are selling guns that do not meet the strict criteria. And warning labels on firearms sold in Massachusetts will warn customers that their handgun is not equipped with a device that fully blocks use by unauthorized users.

"More than 200,000 firearms like this one are stolen from their owners every year in the United States," the label will read, in part. "In addition, there are more than a thousand suicides each year by younger children and teenagers who get access to firearms. Hundreds more die from accidental discharge."

Reilly said the intent of the new rules isn't to put gun dealers out of business. "It's our intent to ensure that the guns they sell are safe," he said.

THE RELIABLE SOURCE

By Lloyd Grove



Is that a threat? Gingrich and Castro, below.

"Nothing has made me more tempted to get back into public life than the Clinton administration's pathetic pandering to Fidel Castro."

—former speaker of the House **Newt Gingrich**, threatening yesterday to make a comeback over the **Ellan Gonzalez** case during his live Online discussion on the [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) Web site.



Vast Right-Wing Temper

Friday is Hillary Day at the American Enterprise Institute. The right-of-center Washington think tank has joined forces with the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, a California group bankrolled largely by billionaire conservative **Richard Mellon Scaife**, to hold a daylong symposium in D.C. on "The Legacy and Future of **Hillary Rodham Clinton**."

Although the gabfest has the usual suspects—such Clinton antagonists as Washington author **Christopher Hitchens** and Wall Street Journal editorialist **John Fund**, and such defenders as feminist icon **Betty Friedan** and Newsweek's **Eleanor Clift**—it also presents a delicious irony: The defenders, who'll each receive a \$200 appearance fee, may get a cheap thrill from being able to spend Scaife's



Horowitz, far left (but not politically), got absolutely livid when asked about the money behind a daylong symposium focused on Hillary Clinton.



BY ROBERT DURELL—LOS ANGELES TIMES

money—the same dollars that fund what Senate candidate Clinton once dubbed the "vast right-wing conspiracy."

"It's ironic, given that he was and is the banker to the right-wing conspiracy," participant and Clinton sympathizer **David Brock** told us. "The funding raises some questions." The center's communications director, **Monty Warner**, said that while Scaife may be a major backer of the Center for the Study of Popular

Culture (donating \$3.8 million from 1989 to 1998, according to public records), money for the Hillary conference was raised independently.

Center Director **David Horowitz** was less sanguine. When we asked him about the situation, he shouted profanities at us. "Didn't you learn from McCarthy that this kind of guilt by association is not healthy?" Horowitz demanded in a rare quotable comment. "Richard Scaife's character has been practically assassinated thanks to you liberals at The Washington Post. . . . [Bleep] you!"

THIS JUST IN

After nearly a decade of hosting the most glamorous, celebrity-filled after-parties at the White House Correspondents Dinner, Vanity Fair magazine will be a no-show at the April 29 event. "I've gotten tired of it all, to be honest," Editor in Chief **Graydon Carter** told us yesterday. "I'd rather be with my family in the country. I could be sitting by a beautiful lake, maybe even taking a swim, or I could see a lot of women in spangled dresses in the

Washington Hilton ballroom. Which would you do?" Go to the dinner, of course!

Juwan Howard is the latest entrant in our Exciting Celebrity Tip Challenge. The Washington Wizards forward left a \$100 tip—or 39 percent—on \$257 worth of drinks at Bethesda's Shark Club and Pacific Grill, where he and half a dozen pals were hanging out Saturday night.

Lauren Hutton's Hormones

Still the gloriously gap-toothed super-model at age 56, **Lauren Hutton** is in Washington today touting her latest enthusiasm: hormone replacement therapy to help women cope with menopause. She'll evangelize to female employees at Fannie Mae's D.C. headquarters and also meet with Sens. **Arlen Specter** (R-Pa.) and **Tom Harkin** (D-Iowa).



COURTESY LAUREN HUTTON

Lauren Hutton, estrogen evangelist.

"Hormone replacement therapy saved my life," said Hutton, a paid spokeswoman for the pharmaceutical company Wyeth-Ayerst, which makes and markets estrogen pills and other treatments to combat the onset of bone loss, Alzheimer's disease, colon cancer and other diseases associated with menopause—although preliminary results of a major federal study indicate that therapy recipients also face a slightly increased risk of heart attacks, strokes and blood clots.

"I went through menopause early, when I was 46, and the hot flashes are like silent bombs going off inside you," Hutton told us. "I've had the same Park Avenue gynecologist for the last 27 years, but when he recommended HRT, I knew better and I didn't take it for a year. And I went from 5 feet 7½ inches tall to 5-foot-7, because of bone loss from osteoporosis."

Hutton has now been taking daily doses for the past nine

years. "I can usually pick out the women who are taking it, because they look much younger than their age, and they don't look like they've shrunk or dried up. I saw **Diane Sawyer** and said, 'You take hormone replacement therapy, don't you?' And she said yes. In fact, all the smart New York professional women that I run into take it. The problem comes with the 80 percent of menopausal women who don't take it." Sawyer didn't comment to us.

Hutton told us she's busy with photo shoots when not scuba-diving all over the world, and confided that she's not romantically involved. "I'm a single girl, and it's sooo okay I'm a little worried. I used to go with guys 10 years younger, but now I'm looking for someone my own size—someone who has done a lot of things in life, seen a lot of things. It is hard, at this age, to find that kind of guy, unless he's married—and I stay away from married men."

Concerns About Guns Put New Pressure on State Legislators

By MICHAEL JANOFSKY

DENVER, Jan. 4 — With a succession of mass shootings as a backdrop and the November elections ahead, political wrangling over gun control has emerged in many states as lawmakers gather this week for the start of the 2000 legislative sessions.

In the wake of killings at Columbine High School and elsewhere, polls show that a growing number of Americans want their state representatives to do something to reduce gun violence. Last year, state legislators considered more than 1,000 gun-related bills. About 50 proposed to tighten controls over access, and more than half of them were signed into law. Many that were not passed last year are expected to be debated again this year.

"To say it's going to be an active legislative year is an understatement," said James J. Baker, chief lobbyist for the National Rifle Association. "There may not be more gun legislation under consideration than last year, but there will certainly be as much."

Lawmakers in almost every state are preparing to debate measures that would affect gun ownership. Following are three of the more prominent examples:

¶ In California, the Democrats who control both houses of the legislature, plan to build on the tough restrictions they passed last year with an ambitious new proposal to require that gun dealers be licensed and the guns they sell be registered, much like motor vehicles. But Gov. Gray Davis, also a Democrat, has asked for a moratorium on the introduction this year of any major gun legislation.

¶ A fight among Republicans is expected to continue in Illinois, where Gov. George Ryan, a moderate who

Bills that failed after the Columbine killings will be debated again.

favors tighter restrictions on gun access, lost to Senate Republicans, who defeated a bill that would have maintained the penalty for carrying a concealed weapon as a felony. The governor has vowed to bring up the measure again in the session that begins next week.

¶ In Maryland, lawmakers will consider legislation that would require trigger locks for guns as a way to prevent accidental shootings by children. If the legislation is passed, Maryland would become the sixth state to require that safety devices be part of any sale, joining California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. But in Maryland, the legislative fight is expected to be waged across urban-rural lines, with members of both parties on each side. Lawmakers from urban areas generally favor the legislation, and those from rural areas oppose it.

Randy Kozuch, the rifle association's director of state and local affairs, said that in addition to fighting proposed gun control measures, association lobbyists would be pushing for legislation that bars municipalities from suing companies that manufacture guns and ammunition.

Last year, Mr. Kozuch said, 14 states passed such measures, and in the months ahead, he predicted that as many as 20 more might do the

same.

Both Mr. Baker, the association lobbyist, and Joe Sudbay, director of state legislation for Handgun Control, a nonprofit organization that supports tighter ownership restrictions, agreed that the Columbine High shootings, in which 14 students and a teacher died, had played a role in new efforts to pass new gun restrictions.

But unlike Mr. Baker, who predicted that few states would tighten controls, Mr. Sudbay said public sentiment was forcing more state legislators to take stronger action, especially with an election 10 months away. As one recent example, he cited Pennsylvania, where the governor, Tom Ridge, a Republican, and the Legislature are generally sympathetic to gun owners.

Last year, Pennsylvania adopted a law that denied local jurisdictions the right to sue gun makers, but Mr. Ridge also signed into law a child-safety measure.

"People are fed up," Mr. Sudbay said. "Mothers are afraid of sending their kids to school."

Perhaps nowhere has the debate over gun control gained a higher profile than here in Colorado, where state lawmakers expect to consider at least five measures that would further restrict access to guns.

The number of bills is not so unusual, even for a Western state where people generally look askance at government intervention and Republicans have controlled both houses of the legislature since 1976. Democrats introduce them all the time.

But this year, support for tightening access to guns has been led by Gov. Bill Owens, a Republican, who said the Columbine High shootings convinced him that the state needed

to take a more "common-sense approach" to gun laws.

"Columbine forced me and others to take a look at our current system of gun regulations," Mr. Owens said in an interview. "I realized that there are some areas we need to fill in with new laws."

As a result, Mr. Owens has been working to build bipartisan support for a series of measures, some of which have been defeated in the past.

They would require background checks for purchases at gun shows, raise to 21 from 18 the minimum age to buy a handgun at a gun show, make it illegal for someone to buy a gun at a show to give to someone else, include juvenile records in background checks of all firearm purchases and create liability for the unsafe storage of firearms in the home.

So far, Democrats have agreed to sponsor three of Mr. Owens's bills; Republicans, two. And leaders of both parties are predicting that as many as three of the measures might reach Mr. Owens for signing this year.

Mr. Owens said their passage could make Colorado a model for other states. But lawmakers in both parties said they doubted that any action here would lead to a national trend inasmuch as few believe that any of the measures Mr. Owens supports would have prevented an incident like the one at Columbine High.

But John Head, co-president of Safe Colorado, a new state gun control lobbying group, said he applauded Mr. Owens's efforts.

"I don't want to see perfect drive out the good," Mr. Head said. "If you try to go too far, nothing happens. You have to deal with these things one step at a time."

States Gather Big Surpluses, Benefit of a Strong Economy

Some Lower Taxes and Increase Spending

By ROBERT PEAR

WASHINGTON, Jan. 4 — Buoyed by revenues from a strong economy, states have accumulated large surpluses, are cutting taxes and plan to increase spending for education and health care this year.

In a new report, the National Governors' Association said 36 states had surpluses equal to 5 percent or more of their spending.

State surpluses totaled \$35 billion at the end of the 1999 fiscal year, and states expect to wind up the current fiscal year with more than \$27 billion in surpluses.

In the last year, 42 states cut taxes. And a separate survey by the National Conference of State Legislatures says that at least one-fourth of the states are seriously considering tax cuts this year. Governors or legislative leaders have proposed such cuts in Alaska, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah and Wyoming.

The conference of state legislatures said states had cut taxes in each of the last five years. William T. Pound, executive director of the conference, said: "For the sixth year in a row, states are expecting to see continued sound fiscal health. This unprecedented streak is the fiscal equivalent of defying gravity."

In Massachusetts, State Senator Mark C. Montigny, a Democrat who is chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, said, "We're in about the strongest financial position we've been in." Mr. Montigny said the state had a comfortable cushion in its unemployment fund and its budget stabilization fund, enough to carry it through a recession, should one occur.

The last recession ended in March 1991, and President Clinton often says that the nation will set a record next month for "the longest economic expansion in the history of our country."

In this year's elections, politicians from both parties are stressing their commitment to tax cuts.

Gov. Thomas R. Carper of Delaware, a Democrat running for the Senate seat held for 29 years by William V. Roth Jr., a Republican, boasts that Delaware has cut personal or business taxes for seven years in a row.

Stacey R. Mazer, a fiscal analyst at the National Association of State Budget Officers, said states were using more of their surplus money for construction of roads and schools this year. By contrast, she said, in the last few years, they set aside more of the money in "rainy day" funds, which can be used in time of economic trouble. But having made provision for a rainy day, states say they can now use their surpluses for other purposes.

Gov. Roy Barnes of Georgia, a Democrat, asked the State Legislature on Monday to use some of the state's \$648 million surplus to improve education and health care, and he is also proposing a cut in property taxes.

"We have been blessed with unprecedented prosperity," Mr. Barnes said. "One way to help keep Georgia prosperous is to let taxpayers keep more of their hard-earned money."

The New York State Legislature convenes on Wednesday, and members say they expect a surplus of \$1 billion or more in the fiscal year that ends March 31. That does not include a surplus of \$1.8 billion that accumulated in the prior fiscal year and is being used to pay for property tax cuts.

In New York, as in many states, legislators would like to use some of the surplus for programs popular

with voters. But independent budget monitors, including bond-rating agencies, have expressed concern that tax cuts already enacted in New York could hamper the state's ability to deliver services, particularly if there is an economic downturn. Gov. George E. Pataki, a Republican, is expected to plead with lawmakers to set aside much of the surplus as a hedge against such a downturn.

In California, the Legislature convened this week, with state officials projecting a budget surplus of at least \$2.6 billion for the current fiscal year. And they foresee a \$3 billion surplus for the next year.

How to use such surpluses will be a major issue for lawmakers in California and other states. State legislatures begin their regular sessions this month in 36 states. Legislators convene in eight more states in February, March or April.

Raymond C. Scheppach, executive director of the National Governors' Association, said that Medicaid costs were surging again, after several years of slow growth in the health program for low-income people. Spending on prescription drugs is a major reason for the increase, he said.

The survey by the governors' association found that states cut taxes last year by a total of \$5.2 billion. Texas reported the biggest cut, \$1.9 billion, followed by Florida (\$834 million), Minnesota (\$796 million), Michigan (\$497 million), Pennsylvania (\$407 million), Ohio (\$337 million) and California (\$302 million).

Property tax relief and other tax cuts were a major element of Gov. George W. Bush's legislative pro-

Money is tucked away, but no rainy days are in the near forecast. Now what?

gram in Texas last year. And they are a major element of the record on which he is running for president.

New York reported a tax cut of \$99 million, while New Jersey cut taxes by \$101 million and Connecticut cut \$104 million.

Illinois reported the biggest net increase in revenues, \$436 million, mainly because it increased motor vehicle registration fees, to help finance public works projects. New Hampshire, Oregon and Tennessee also increased taxes, the governors' association said.

The governors said 10 states had taken action to change the amount of cash payments to families on welfare in the current fiscal year. Nine states — California, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Montana, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia — increased benefits for at least some welfare recipients. Florida was the only state that reported a reduction in cash assistance benefits, a 15 percent decrease.

In 40 states, the report said, welfare benefit levels remain the same as in 1999. In general, it said, states are making fundamental changes in the structure of welfare programs without altering benefit levels. The number of people on welfare has plummeted, by 51 percent since January 1993, but spending for welfare and child care has increased. As a result, states say, they now spend more for each family on welfare, on the average, than they did seven years ago.

Gun - States

Gun Control Conflict Brews

In Calif., Davis's Resistance, Upcoming Primary Color Debate

By RENE SANCHEZ
Washington Post Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES—Picking up where they left off last year, California's lawmakers are charging back to work vowing to pass another batch of tough gun control laws. But this time, as a high-stakes election season begins to unfold, it seems they have lost their most important ally, Democratic Gov. Gray Davis.

The budding conflict on gun control here in the nation's most populous and often most influential state is hardly just another routine squabble in party politics. California has emerged as a national leader in restricting the sale and use of firearms, with its trend-setting legislature firmly controlled by Democrats and showing more willingness than Congress to tackle the issue. The state's pivotal primary for presidential candidates also is only two months away, and gun control figures to be at the forefront of voter concerns.

Last summer, with the fervent support of the newly elected Davis, California adopted a groundbreaking set of laws designed to crack down on the proliferation of guns. The package includes what gun control groups call the nation's toughest ban on assault weapons. It limits handgun purchases in the state to one a month and prohibits the manufacture or sale of cheap "Saturday Night Special" handguns that often are used in violent crimes. It also requires all guns made or sold in California to have safety locks on triggers.

Now, lawmakers across the Golden State say they want to take another potentially significant step: Imposing more extensive registration and new licensing requirements on prospective gun owners.

An array of proposals already is being developed in the legislature, which reconvened last week. Most would force gun owners to take more safety tests, pay higher fees and renew a firearms license every year or few years. Advocates of the ideas say that they would help police track guns used in crimes more easily and conduct background checks of gun owners regularly—not just at the time of a purchase.

"We made tremendous strides last year, but we still need to do more," said state Rep. Jack Scott, the chairman of the legislature's se-

The Record of Sale

An increase in the number of Dealer Record of Sale (DROS) documents processed has led to more denials of gun purchases.



SOURCE: California Department of Justice
DOUG STEVENS—THE WASHINGTON POST

lect committee on gun violence. "These are common-sense things that the public says it wants."

Many lawmakers, including Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa, are urging Davis to keep an open mind about supporting a new slate of gun regulations. After years of political gridlock on the issue, they know they have the votes and the key interest groups on their side to get measures passed. The California Police Chiefs Association has expressed support for licensing and registration of guns, and has yet to complain about the workload the new laws will create.

Stopping now, lawmakers contend, also would send the wrong message to an electorate that in many polls is showing growing interest in strict gun control.

But Davis sounds worried that the legislature is going too far, too fast. His caution, his aides say, is both practical and political. He wants to give law enforcement officials and the public a chance to adjust to and assess the new gun laws without creating still more rules. He also apparently fears that approving another wave of gun laws could galvanize conservative voters at a time when the looming presidential race in make-or-break California looks quite competitive. Some early polls of hypothetical

election matchups show Vice President Gore, whom Davis has endorsed, in a dead heat with Texas Gov. George W. Bush.

In his annual address to the legislature on Wednesday, Davis barely mentioned gun control, saying instead that his dominant priority this year will be using the state's projected \$3 billion surplus to hire better teachers and improve public schools. He praised the gun measures that lawmakers approved last year as sensible and important, but then said simply, "They need time to work."

Garry South, a political adviser to Davis, said the legislature should not doubt the governor's resolve on shelving gun control for the year. "He is being very clear," South said. "We should not be overloading the system with too many new laws at once. We believe the public wants us to take a deep breath and make sure these laws work first. There can be a real backlash to where we're going."

Even though they are just taking effect, the new laws are creating seismic changes in California's gun industry. First, the mere prospect of tougher gun regulations is prompting smaller weapons retailers, some with questionable business practices, to close. Larger outlets that gun groups say often work more comfortably with law enforcement agencies are taking control of the market.

Second, gun sales in the state have been soaring, especially in the past few months. In December, sales were twice as high as they were a year earlier. The increases were the first in California since 1993, the year after the Los Angeles riots. Yet annual gun sales are still lower now than they were then.

The National Rifle Association regards the spurt in sales as the first of many unintended consequences from the legislature's steps on gun control last year. NRA leaders in California also contend that some of the new laws are confusing gun dealers in the state. Two major dealers already have stopped selling several kinds of rifles because of how the new rules are drawn, but the state attorney general is calling that move an NRA ploy to undermine the law.

Adding new licensing and registration requirements as that debate rages would only make matters

more complicated, and do little good, the NRA says.

Steve Helsley, the NRA's top official in California, said such steps would force the state to create a costly new bureaucracy, overburden local police agencies and harass law-abiding gun owners with higher fees and endless paperwork. Gun owners also would be at risk of having legal weapons seized, he said.

"All of this is focused on the good guys," Helsley said. "The key issue is where registration and licensing takes you—to confiscation. If you can't keep paying the fees, you surrender the gun."

Chuck Michel, a director of the 70,000-member California Rifle and Pistol Association, said, "The only goal of this is to make it more and more difficult to own a gun."

Under current California law, gun buyers must take a short multiple-choice test on firearms safety, submit to one-time background checks and wait 10 days to get a weapon. But gun control advocates contend that process makes it difficult for criminal investigators to track guns and is riddled with loopholes. Military veterans and licensed hunters, for example, are exempt from taking safety tests. The tests also can be taken and retaken in gun stores, which gun control groups call a blatant conflict of interest.

Lawmakers who support gun licensing, and renewals every few years, say that it would be a simple process not much different from the requirements for owning motor vehicles the public readily accepts.

"The system we have now is very weak. When someone buys a gun, they get checked once and never checked again," said Luis Tolley, the western regional director for Handgun Control. "There are no hands-on safety tests, and we let gun stores give the written test. It's like letting a used car salesman tell someone, 'Here's a license; it's okay to drive.' We would never let that happen with cars."

Democrats End '99 With A Cash Edge

House Campaign Committee Has More Left Than GOP

By JULIET EILPERIN and SUSAN B. GLASSER
Washington Post Staff Writers

House Democrats raised more than \$33 million last year for their campaign arm, according to Democratic sources, and will head into the 2000 elections with significantly more money left to spend on this year's contests than their traditionally better-funded GOP rivals.

With only five seats separating Democrats from the House majority, the party has dramatically stepped up its fund-raising in the battle for Congress. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's receipts for 1999 outpaced all previous fund-raising efforts, and sources said they have roughly \$19 million cash on hand.

Republicans declined to release their 1999 figures, but in a Dec. 14 conference call with members of his executive committee, National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Thomas M. Davis III (Va.) predicted that the party would have raised \$48 million by the end of the year and have just under \$10 million cash on hand.

NRCC officials, however, said they are still tabulating and that Davis's projection did not reflect the full year's receipts.

The Democratic totals reflect a financial turnaround. During the previous pre-election year, the DCCC raised just \$14.8 million total and entered the election year with \$1.6 million on hand.

One GOP leadership aide, who asked not to be identified, noted that Davis made the decision to spend money on initiatives last year that will bolster the party's standing in the future, such as \$1 million on the Virginia legislature races and more than \$1 million on redistricting in California and the race to replace the late House member George E. Brown Jr. (D-Calif.). Now that the GOP controls both chambers in Virginia, the aide predicted, the party could pick up two congressional seats in 2002.

"Davis made a lot of investments that will pay off in the long run," the aide said, adding that Republicans will accumulate enough cash this year to make up for the current shortfall. "Money's not going to be a problem."

Though DCCC officials declined to comment on their fund-raising totals, Democrats have been aggressively courting six-figure donors and relying on the national money network of House Minority Leader Richard A. Gephardt (D-Mo.) during the past year. Much of their increase has been fueled by a rise in unlimited "soft money" contributions from corporations, unions and wealthy individuals—which can't be spent directly on this year's House races by the party but will indirectly boost the candidates' prospects through get-out-the-vote operations and television ads.

Indeed, Republicans have been so concerned about the Democrats' newfound fund-raising prowess that, in late fall, they hired a veteran lobbyist, Dan Mattoon of Bell-South Corp., to serve as the NRCC's top aide, and he has focused his early efforts on heading off a wave of business contributions to the DCCC.

Protest March Against Flag Attracts 600 In S. Carolina

By The New York Times

CHARLESTON, S.C., April 2 — More than 600 South Carolinians began a five-day protest march to the state capitol in Columbia today to press legislators to remove the Confederate battle flag from the Statehouse dome.

Former Gov. John West, 78, a state lawmaker when the flag was raised by the all-white General Assembly in 1962, was at the front of the procession, where marchers carried the South Carolina state flag, and chanted, "One state, one flag."

Mr. West, a Democrat and governor from 1971 to 1975, had led an effort to get lawmakers who raised the Confederate battle flag to ask for its removal.

"As I have had to say publicly, somewhat to my embarrassment, in hindsight one of the mistakes I made as governor is not taking it down," he said. "It was not an issue then. Had it been an issue, I would like to think I would have taken it down."

The battle over the Confederate battle flag has become the center of political and racial debate here, drawing the ire of black groups and becoming an issue in the presidential primary in February when the Republican candidates, Gov. George W. Bush of Texas and Senator John McCain of Arizona, were repeatedly asked to take a stand on the issue.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has called for a tourism boycott of the state, saying the Confederate battle flag above the Statehouse is a racist emblem. James Gallman, the president of the South Carolina chapter of the N.A.A.C.P., said the march was important because it showed that people of influence supported taking the flag down, and that it was not only a black issue because a majority of the marchers were white.

Flag defenders say it is a symbol of Southern heritage and honors Confederate war dead.

Most South Carolinians, surveys show, want the flag removed.

"Take it down," chanted the demonstrators, led by Mayor Joseph P. Riley Jr. of Charleston, a Democrat, who organized the 120-mile "Get in Step" march. "The purpose is to say the people of South Carolina are in

step, and we want the Legislature to get in step with the people of South Carolina," said the mayor, carrying the blue state flag with its white palmetto tree and crescent as he led marchers into the street.

Mr. Riley said the state risked ruining its reputation if the Confederate battle flag did not come down. "A substantial majority of South Carolinians, African-American and white, believe the flag should not be above the Statehouse," he said.

Mr. Riley said that he organized the march "to demonstrate what you see here — a cross-section of South Carolinians."

They will walk during daylight and plan to arrive in Columbia for a rally on Thursday, when flag supporters have also scheduled a rally.

Sharon Brown, who had her 16-month-old son Davron with her, said: "The flag to me is like the swastika

is to the Jews. It's that offensive to me. If it's that important to others, let them put it in their homes."

Only state lawmakers can remove the flag from the dome, and several plans are under consideration. Organizers of the march say it should be moved to another place of honor.

People gathered at Marion Square in Charleston for the march this afternoon as a small plane circled overhead towing a banner that said, "Keep it flying, dump Riley."

A lone flag supporter stood at the edge of the square with a Confederate battle flag over the edge of his shoulder. The man, Carter Sabo of Charleston, said the flag "reminds me of oak trees and moss, family and brave men." He stood briefly by Sandra and Tommie Gordon, an African-American couple from Malden, and as they parted Ms. Gordon gave Mr. Sabo a hug.

Massachusetts to Enforce Strict Gun Safety Laws

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

BOSTON, April 2 — The Massachusetts attorney general is to announce on Monday that he will begin carrying out the strictest and most comprehensive handgun safety laws in the nation, banning all gun makers and dealers doing business in the state from selling handguns that do not have tamper-proof serial numbers, trigger locks and safety devices enabling a user to know whether the gun is loaded.

The regulations, issued under Massachusetts's consumer protection laws, will also prohibit the sale of all so-called Saturday night specials, cheap handguns favored by criminals. And they will require new devices that make it impossible for handguns to be fired by children under age 6.

Officials in the Massachusetts attorney general's office say they do not know how many handguns for sale by the 700 federally licensed dealers in the state are in compliance with the rules, but they estimate that a large percentage are not. So on Monday they will begin inspections of dealers to issue warnings against the sale of any guns that do not meet the standards and will send similar warnings to gun makers and wholesalers nationwide.

From now on, an official said, the sale of any handgun that does not meet the new standards will be subject to a \$5,000 fine and possible contempt of court penalties.

The rules are the first consumer protection regulations in the country to concentrate on handgun safety, said state officials and Dr. Garen Wintemute, director of the Violence Prevention Research Project at the University of California at Davis and an authority on gun safety. "I think it's a wonderful idea," said Dr. Wintemute. "Fundamentally, firearms are a consumer product."

By contrast, Dr. Wintemute pointed out, Congress specifically exempted the gun industry from regulation by the federal Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The action by the Massachusetts attorney general, Tom Reilly, is the latest of several recent blows to the gun industry, which for years had largely succeeded in warding off gun control laws and lawsuits through the power of the National Rifle Association in Congress and state legisla-

tures.

Over the past year and a half, 30 cities and counties have sued the gun industry, charging it with negligently distributing guns in ways that help criminals buy them. Two weeks ago Smith & Wesson, the nation's oldest and largest handgun manufacturer, in Springfield, Mass., announced that it had agreed to many restrictions in exchange for ending some of the suits. Then on Wednesday the attorney general of New York, Connecticut and Maryland said they had begun antitrust investigations of the gun industry because of evidence that some companies and dealers were conspiring against Smith & Wesson in reaction to its willingness to compromise.

An official of the Massachusetts attorney general's office said today he hoped the new regulations here would be "the sharpest blow yet" to the gun industry.

The rules were originally issued in 1997 by former Attorney General Scott Harshbarger, but were tied up in court appeals by gun companies until last week.

Several major handgun manufacturers will be able to meet some of the new rules, but officials said they believed none would be in compliance with all the regulations and a number of gun makers have resisted many of the key provisions, so it is difficult to predict what will happen when the state begins enforcement.

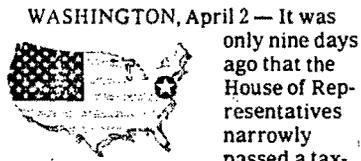
Among the provisions are that all handguns sold within Massachusetts be equipped with trigger locks and devices that make it impossible for children under 6 to pull the trigger, that they have serial numbers that cannot be removed, and that they not be made from cheap materials which make them prone to accidents. The guns also must have load indicators to show whether the gun is loaded as well as magazine safety disconnects to prevent accidental firing if there is a bullet in the chamber even though the magazine has been removed.

Dr. Wintemute said that less than one quarter of all handgun models had load indicators or magazine disconnects. A General Accounting Office study of accidental shootings found that 30 percent of them could have been prevented with the devices, Dr. Wintemute said.

Washington Talk

Surplus Lures Spenders in Congress

By ERIC SCHMITT



WASHINGTON, April 2 — It was only nine days ago that the House of Representatives narrowly passed a tax-and-spending plan that its Republican authors proudly hailed as a model of fiscal restraint.

The budget blueprint called for an increase in spending next year on education and the military, but cut or froze many other domestic programs, and reduced taxes by at least \$150 billion over the next five years.

So imagine the dismay of fiscal conservatives when, just last Thursday, the same House overwhelmingly approved \$12.7 billion in extra spending for this year.

Some of the money was earmarked for what lawmakers said were real emergencies, like battling drug traffickers in beleaguered Colombia and paying for the military operation in Kosovo, that could not wait for the regular appropriations process to finish in a few months.

But lots of other spending was pure pork or projects that were not in any rush, like the \$19.4 million to assist the New York lobster industry, which is suffering a tough season, or the \$2.2 million for a new senior citizens center in Alaska.

For all the red-meat rhetoric of tax cutting and fiscal responsibility, the events of the last week show just how hard it is going to be for Republicans, much less Democrats, to keep their hands off the projected federal surpluses.

"Passage of the supplemental appropriations bill proves that the budget-resolution spending levels are a sham," said Representative John M. Spratt Jr. of South Carolina,

the senior Democrat on the House Budget Committee.

Even some Republicans were appalled. "The American people know the federal government spends too much and wastes too much," said Representative John Shadegg, an Arizona Republican who voted against the extra spending. "Tragically, on Capitol Hill this message is lost in the rush by politicians to re-elect themselves."

Budget plans are nonbinding resolutions that provide a framework for developing specific spending and tax bills. But the appropriations committees, which take the guidance and use it to pay for real things like submarines and low-cost housing subsidies and school lunch programs, have increasingly voiced concern that the budgets are unrealistic.

If the past is any guide, Republicans will find it difficult to remain within the limits set out in their latest budget outline.

Indeed, Mr. Spratt called the House's emergency spending bill "a scheme that allows Congress to pay some fiscal 2001 costs" — recurring expenses like spare parts and helicopter maintenance — "using fiscal year 2000 money."

By easing the pressure on this fall's appropriations bills, lawmakers are eating away at this year's projected \$26 billion surplus of non-Social Security funds and flirting with political danger. If the trend continues, Mr. Spratt warned, the Republican budget over 10 years will spend all of the non-Social Security surplus and \$68 billion of the Social Security surplus.

"We're focused on looking forward in the resolution, knowing that we're getting our pockets picked on the supplemental," conceded a top Budget Committee aide.

And the problems for Republicans do not stop with the House.

Senator Pete V. Domenici, a New Mexico Republican who heads the Senate Budget Committee, laid out his tax-and-spending plan only after weeks of wrangling with conservatives in his party who wanted less spending. The Senate plan tracks closely with the House version.

The Senate committee passed its resolution last week with accompanying fanfare, but only after Senator Phil Gramm, a Texas Republican, extracted a promise from Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi, the majority leader, that the Senate would not take up a supplemental spending bill this year. The full Senate will take up the budget resolution on Monday.

Before winning his concessions, Mr. Gramm said, "We will have found a sure-fire way to stop the Democrats from spending the surplus — have Republicans spend it first."

But Mr. Gramm may now have reason to worry that his ironclad pledge is on the verge of crumbling.

Senator Ted Stevens, an Alaska Republican who heads the Appropriations Committee, intends to push ahead with an emergency spending bill on Tuesday, despite Mr. Lott's promise to block it. Mr. Lott called the House measure a magnet for all sorts of non-urgent spending.

With the lopsided House vote and the influential Mr. Stevens signaling his defiance of his party's leadership, Mr. Lott, an eternal compromiser, suddenly was not sounding as unequivocal on Thursday night as he had earlier in the week.

"I've never said, 'No, never, under no conditions,'" Mr. Lott said, when asked about the prospects for a Senate supplemental. "It depends on what it is."

Ex-Aide Says Reno Didn't Discuss Inquiry Decision

By The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 2 — The prosecutor who once led the investigation of Democratic fund-raising said today that Attorney General Janet Reno had never discussed with him why she rejected his recommendation that an independent counsel be appointed to investigate the involvement of President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore in fund-raising abuses in the 1996 campaign.

But the prosecutor, Charles G. LaBella, who directed the Justice Department's campaign finance task force until 1998, said he did not think that politics had motivated Ms. Reno and added that a full investigation would not necessarily have led to criminal charges.

Mr. LaBella wrote a memorandum in 1998 recommending that an independent counsel be appointed to investigate the president and vice president. In an appearance today on

the NBC News program "Meet the Press," Mr. LaBella said he did not know why Ms. Reno had rejected the recommendation, "because we never had a substantive conversation about the memo since I handed it in."

He said today that he did not believe there had been a political effort to protect the White House.

Mr. LaBella later transferred to San Diego as acting United States attorney, then resigned a year ago.