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RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS

FOR YEARS IN THIS COUNTRY A DEBATE HAS RAGED AS TO WHETHER A CITIZEN'S SO CALLED RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS SHOULD BE REGULATED, OR WHETHER IT COULD EVEN LEGALLY BE REGULATED. HOWEVER, THE CASES OF A PERSON SHOOTING AN ASSAULT WEAPON ONTO A SCHOOLYARD IN STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA, KILLING FIVE SMALL CHILDREN AND INJURING NINE OTHERS, AS WELL AS THE RECENT CASE IN LOUISVILLE WHERE A DERANGED FORMER EMPLOYEE WITH AN ASSAULT WEAPON KILLED NINE EMPLOYEES AND INJURED SEVERAL OTHERS AT THE STANDARD GRAVURE PLANT IN LOUISVILLE, HAS HEATED UP THE DEBATE. THIS CAUSED THE LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL TO DO AN IN-DEPTH STUDY ABOUT GUN CONTROL IN KENTUCKY AND CAUSED ABC NEWS AND TIME MAGAZINE, AMONG OTHERS, TO EXAMINE GUN CONTROL THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. THE THING YOU FIRST OBSERVE IN ANY FORM TO DEBATING GUN CONTROL IS THAT THE PARTIES GENERALLY GENERATE MORE HEAT THAN LIGHT.

THOSE OPPOSED TO GUN CONTROL DO NOT WANT ANY REGULATION OF ANY WEAPON. ON ONE TV SHOW A MEMBER OF THE NRA STATED THAT THEY MIGHT CONTROL THE ATOMIC BOMB BUT ANYTHING SHORT OF THAT HE WOULD OPPOSE. ON THE OTHER END OF THE SCALE, I HAVE NOT HEARD OF ANYONE WHO WANTS TO OUTLAW THE OWNERSHIP OF WEAPONS ENTIRELY WHICH IS WHAT THE GUN LOBBYISTS SAY WILL HAPPEN IF THERE IS ANY REGULATION OF WEAPONS. I PERSONALLY WOULD NOT BE COMFORTABLE KNOWING

THERE WAS A CENTRAL FILE SOMEWHERE IN THE UNITED STATES THAT SHOWED WHERE EVERY WEAPON WAS LOCATED AND EVERY WEAPON OWNER LIVED. I DOUBT THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN SINCE THERE IS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN ONE HUNDRED MILLION AND TWO HUNDRED MILLION WEAPONS IN THE HANDS OF AMERICANS. I ALSO WOULD BE UNCOMFORTABLE KNOWING THAT WHEN I GOT ON A COMMERCIAL AIRLINER ANYONE ON THE PLANE COULD BE CARRYING ANY TYPE OF WEAPON THEY DESIRE. AS TECHNOLOGY CHANGES, THE LAW MUST CHANGE TO ADAPT TO DIFFERENT SITUATIONS. THIS HAS BEEN TRUE IN ALL OTHER SEGMENTS OF OUR LIFE. WHEN OUR CONSTITUTIONS WERE WRITTEN, WE DID NOT HAVE AUTOMATIC WEAPONS OR ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES THAT CAN BE LAUNCHED BY TWO MEN, NOR WERE THERE SPEED LIMITS ON ANY ROADS, OR REQUIREMENTS FOR POLLUTION CONTROL.

FIRST, LET'S GET OUT OF THE WAY THE CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES RELATING TO GUN CONTROL. THE SECOND AMENDMENT TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN INTERPRETED, AS DEFINED BY THE SUPREME COURT, AS PREVENTING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FROM PROHIBITING STATES FROM HAVING A STATE MILITIA. EVERY CASE COMING BEFORE THE SUPREME COURT ON THE ISSUE OF REGULATING INDIVIDUAL'S RIGHTS IN DEALING WITH FIREARMS HAS UPHeld THE GOVERNMENT'S RIGHT TO REGULATE THE USE OF FIREARMS. IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT, JUST GET CAUGHT CROSSING THE STATE LINE WITH A SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN. HOWEVER, IN KENTUCKY THAT QUESTION MAY HAVE A DIFFERENT ANSWER.

THE KENTUCKY CONSTITUTION PROVIDES THAT AN INDIVIDUAL SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS TO PROTECT HIMSELF

AND HIS STATE, EXCEPT THAT THE LEGISLATURE MAY PASS LAWS TO PREVENT THE CARRYING OF CONCEALED WEAPONS. SO WHILE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MAY REGULATE YOUR RIGHTS, IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT THE COMMONWEALTH OF KENTUCKY CAN DO SO AND, IN FACT, IN 1984 THE LEGISLATURE PASSED A LAW PROHIBITING CITIES FROM HAVING ANY FIREARMS' REGULATIONS. AS MARK TWAIN SAID, "WHEN THE END OF TIME COMES I WANT TO BE IN KENTUCKY BECAUSE EVERYTHING ALWAYS GETS THERE TEN YEARS LATE." SO, IT SEEMS THAT KENTUCKY IS THE BEST PLACE FOR UNRESTRICTED OWNERSHIP OF FIREARMS. IN KENTUCKY, IT IS HARDER TO BUY BEER THAN IT IS TO BUY GUNS. YOU CAN BUY BEER LEGALLY IN ONLY ABOUT 20 TO 25 COUNTIES; HOWEVER, YOU CAN BUY GUNS IN EVERY COUNTY FROM ONE OF THE STATE'S 5,000 LICENSED DEALERS AND CERTAINLY FROM ANY NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS. KENTUCKY, A STATE OF ONLY 3.7 MILLION PEOPLE, FOR EXAMPLE, HAD 161 GUN HOMICIDES IN 1987, MORE THAN EITHER WEST GERMANY (109) OR GREAT BRITAIN (93), BOTH OF WHICH HAVE POPULATIONS OF MORE THAN 55 MILLION. ANNUALLY, YOU HEAR THE FIGURES OF 30 TO 40 THOUSAND PEOPLE DYING FROM FIREARMS IN THE UNITED STATES. HOWEVER, THE FIGURE NOT EMPHASIZED IN THESE STATISTICS IS THAT PROBABLY 60 TO 65 PERCENT OF THOSE DEATHS ARE SUICIDES. IN GENERAL, THERE IS A LOT OF MISINFORMATION OR MISDIRECTED INFORMATION BEING GENERATED BY BOTH SIDES OF THE ISSUE.

AT THE PRESENT TIME, ON A NATIONAL BASIS AND PERHAPS ON A STATE BASIS, THE MOST DISCUSSED REGULATION OF FIREARMS IS THE EFFORT TO OUTLAW PRIVATE OWNERSHIP OF SO CALLED ASSAULT WEAPONS AND TO REQUIRE A SEVEN DAY WAITING

PERIOD ON THE SALE OF HANDGUNS AND/OR POSSIBLE OTHER WEAPONS TO PERMIT POLICE AUTHORITIES TO VERIFY WHETHER OR NOT AN INDIVIDUAL HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF A FELONY OR HAS BEEN INVOLUNTARILY COMMITTED TO A MENTAL INSTITUTION. THERE ARE MANY VARIATIONS OF THESE PROPOSALS, BUT IN ESSENCE THEY ARE WANTING TO OUTLAW THE USE OF SO CALLED ASSAULT WEAPONS, AND (2) TO HAVE A WAITING PERIOD BEFORE A PERSON CAN PURCHASE A HANDGUN. TO DETERMINE HOW EFFECTIVE THESE RESTRICTIONS WOULD BE, IF AT ALL, REQUIRES A REVIEW OF THE TYPE OF SITUATIONS THEY ARE INTENDING TO CONTROL.

FIRST, THE BAN ON ASSAULT WEAPONS APPEARS TO HAVE THE GREATEST SUPPORT. PRESIDENT BUSH, AN NRA MEMBER, HAS BY EXECUTIVE ORDER TEMPORARILY OUTLAWED THE IMPORT OF THESE WEAPONS AT A TIME WHEN ORDERS WERE WAITING FOR 900,000 OF THEM TO COME INTO THIS COUNTRY. THE TIME MAGAZINE POLL SHOWED THAT 73 PERCENT OF THE GUN OWNERS SURVEYED FAVORED MANDATORY REGISTRATION OF SEMI-AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. EVEN THE COURIER-JOURNAL POLL WHICH ASKED WOULD YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE A NATIONAL BAN ON THE SALE OF MILITARY STYLE ASSAULT WEAPONS SUCH AS THE AK-47, 75 PERCENT OF THOSE ASKED SAID THEY WOULD, INCLUDING 65 PERCENT OF THE HUNTERS QUESTIONED. IRONICALLY, ASSAULT WEAPONS OF THAT TYPE ACCOUNT FOR PROBABLY NO MORE THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE STREET CRIME OF THIS COUNTRY AND AT THE PRESENT TIME DO NOT CONSTITUTE A MAJOR CRIMINAL THREAT. INCIDENTALLY, THERE ARE WEAPONS NOT CALLED ASSAULT WEAPONS WHICH ARE MORE POWERFUL AND FIRE JUST AS RAPIDLY BUT ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THIS REGULATION. WHEN

THERE IS AN INCIDENT INVOLVING AN ASSAULT WEAPON, IT DRAWS GREAT PUBLIC ATTENTION, AS THE CASE IN THE STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA, SCHOOLYARD OR STANDARD GRAVURE IN LOUISVILLE. HOWEVER, MOST LAW ENFORCEMENTS AGENCIES FAVOR THIS BAN ALSO AND THE REASON IS BELIEVED TO BE FIRST, THAT THE RATE WITH WHICH THESE WEAPONS ARE BEING MANUFACTURED AND IMPORTED INDICATES THAT THEIR USE IS GROWING RAPIDLY AND THE FEAR THAT THEY WILL BECOME PROMINENT IN STREET CRIME IS OF GREAT CONCERN TO THE POLICE, ALTHOUGH MANY AUTHORITIES FEEL THAT THE AMERICAN AR-15 IS TOO LARGE AND CLUMSY TO EVER BE A VERY POPULAR STREET GUN AS OPPOSED TO SMALLER, CONCEALABLE SEMI-AUTOMATIC WEAPONS WHICH ARE BECOMING POPULAR IN THE STREETS.

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THEIR POTENTIAL TO WRECK HAVOC ON LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE AND POLICE IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME IS THE REASONING BEHIND THE EFFORT TO REMOVE THEM FROM THE HANDS OF THE PUBLIC. BY WAY OF DEMONSTRATION, THE ARGUMENT IS OFTEN MADE THAT MANY MORE PEOPLE ARE KILLED BY BLUNT INSTRUMENTS OR KNIVES THAN THEY ARE BY FIREARMS. HOWEVER, I DON'T THINK ANYONE REALISTICALLY THINKS THAT THE GUNMAN IN LOUISVILLE COULD HAVE TAKEN OUT AS MANY PEOPLE OR PERHAPS GOTTEN PAST ONE OR MAYBE TWO HAD HE BEEN ARMED WITH AN ASSAULT WEAPON. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT IF THERE IS ANY NATIONAL REGULATION PASSED ON ANY WEAPONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THE MILITARY TYPE ASSAULT WEAPON IS THE MOST LIKELY TO BE REGULATED.

THIS BRINGS US BACK TO THE APPARENT WEAPON OF CHOICE AND THE WEAPON OF THE LARGEST CONTROVERSY AND THAT IS THE HANDGUN. HANDGUNS ARE EASILY CONCEALED, EASILY BOUGHT AND SOLD, AND ARE DESIGNED NOT FOR SPORT OR FOR GAME BUT PRIMARILY FOR SHOOTING OTHER PEOPLE. THREE OUT OF EVERY FIVE MURDERS COMMITTED IN THE UNITED STATES ARE COMMITTED WITH HANDGUNS. SURPRISINGLY, THE TIME MAGAZINE POLL INDICATED THAT 87 PERCENT OF THE GUN OWNERS POLLED FAVORED A FEDERAL LAW REQUIRING A SEVEN DAY WAITING PERIOD AND A BACKGROUND CHECK FOR ANYONE WHO WANTS TO BUY A HANDGUN. THE COURIER-JOURNAL POLL FOUND THAT 41 PERCENT OF THE PEOPLE IN KENTUCKY THOUGHT THAT HAVING A GUN IN THE HOME MADE IT A SAFER PLACE TO LIVE. TWENTY-THREE PERCENT THOUGHT THAT IT MADE THE HOME A MORE DANGEROUS PLACE TO LIVE.

THE TWENTY-THREE PERCENT MAY BE MORE CORRECT THAN THE MAJORITY. FOR EVERY INTRUDER KILLED TRYING TO ENTER A HOME, 43 FAMILY MEMBERS OR ACQUAINTANCES DIE. I FIND THAT TO BE THE MOST FRIGHTENING STATISTIC I DISCOVERED IN THIS RESEARCH. IN HOMES HAVING GUNS FOR PROTECTION, THERE ARE 43 FAMILY MEMBERS OR ACQUAINTANCES WHO DIE EITHER IN THE HEAT OF PASSION OR ACCIDENTALLY FOR EVERY ONE BURGLAR WHO DIES. IN REALITY, WE ALL KNOW THAT BURGLARS DO NOT WANT TO BURGLE HOMES THAT ARE OCCUPIED. NOT ONLY IS IT PERCEIVED TO BE MORE DANGEROUS FOR THEM, BUT THE CRIMINAL PENALTIES CAN BE SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER, AS WELL AS THE RISK. HOWEVER, NINE OUT OF TEN TIMES WHEN A HOME IS BURGLED, THE GUNS ARE STOLEN. BASED ON THESE FINDINGS, A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL

CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL IN ATLANTA STATED THAT THIS IS EXACTLY THE KIND OF INFORMATION THAT SUGGESTS TO ME THAT IT MAY BE MORE DANGEROUS FOR THE PEOPLE WHO OWN A GUN THAN FOR THE PEOPLE WHO ROB. THE RECENT MURDER OF A WIFE BY A HUSBAND IN BOSTON THAT WAS SUBJECT TO MUCH NEWS COVERAGE BROUGHT TO LIFE A REPORTED STATISTIC THAT A MARRIED WOMAN IS THREE TIMES AS LIKELY TO BE MURDERED BY HER SPOUSE THAN A STRANGER. MOST OF THE HOME HOMICIDES BETWEEN FAMILY AND ACQUAINTANCES ARE USUALLY DONE IN THE HEAT OF PASSION AND MOST LIKELY WOULD NOT HAVE OCCURRED HAD THE MEANS NOT BEEN READILY AVAILABLE. INVARIABLY AFTER THEY OCCUR, THEY ARE DEEPLY REGRETTED AND USUALLY IT IS CONCEDED THAT THE INCIDENT WOULD NOT HAVE OCCURRED HAD THE WEAPON NOT BEEN READILY AVAILABLE. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO REASON TO THINK THAT ANY SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF THE PEOPLE USING GUNS IN THESE SITUATIONS WOULD BE PREVENTED FROM OBTAINING THOSE GUNS BY THE PROPOSED SEVEN DAY WAITING PERIOD. THIS PART OF THE GUN CONTROL DEBATE WILL NOT BE RESOLVED BY REGULATION IN MOST CASES ANYWAY, BUT MORE BY EDUCATION. ADMITTEDLY, A SEVEN DAY WAIT MIGHT PREVENT NUMEROUS DEATHS FROM HEAT OF PASSION CRIMES OR SUICIDE IF THAT DELAY WERE BUILT IN. HOWEVER, IN MOST INSTANCES, THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO WANT A GUN TO PROTECT THEIR HOME AND COULD QUALIFY TO GET ONE UNDER ANY EXISTING PROPOSED REGULATION AND ONCE THE GUN IS AVAILABLE IN THE HOME WITHOUT PROPER EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND RESPONSIBILITY, THIS PROBLEM WILL CONTINUE REGARDLESS OF THE REGULATION.

ONE PROPOSED AREA OF REGULATION I DO NOT BELIEVE WOULD STIR MUCH DEBATE AND THAT IS MAKING THE HOME GUN OWNERS MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GUN. THERE IS PERHAPS ALREADY CIVIL LIABILITY IN SOME INSTANCES AND PERHAPS SHOULD BE MORE CIVIL LIABILITIES SPELLED OUT AND POSSIBLY CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR A GUN OWNER WHO DOES NOT PROPERLY CARE FOR A GUN IN THE HOME. WITHIN THE LAST TWO YEARS, WITHIN ONE-HALF OF A MILE WHERE WE SIT TONIGHT, A CHILD WAS KILLED WITH AN UNLOADED GUN BY A PLAYMATE. THIS PAST SUMMER, THE POLICE HAD REPORTS OF A THREE OR FOUR YEAR OLD FIRING A GUN IN THE HOUSE THAT THE CHILD HAD FOUND UNDER THE COUCH. ANY PERSON WHO CHOOSES TO OWN A GUN SHOULD CHOOSE TO BE RESPONSIBLE TO AT LEAST PROTECT HIS FAMILY AND OTHERS FROM THIS TYPE OF INJURY. ALSO, WHILE WE COULD DO LITTLE ABOUT ALL OF THE GUNS THAT ARE OUT THERE NOW, I SEE NO REASON WHY GUN MAKERS, JUST LIKE ASPIRIN MAKERS, OUGHT TO BE REQUIRED TO MAKE HANDGUNS CHILD PROOF IF THEY ARE GOING TO BE SO WIDELY DISTRIBUTED. THAT WOULD SEEM TO BE A SMALL PRICE TO PAY TO PREVENT THIS TYPE OF SHOOTING.

THE TIME MAGAZINE POLL INDICATED THAT MOST GUN OWNERS KEEP THEIR GUN IN THE BEDROOM. HOWEVER, I WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE SAME POLL INDICATED THAT WHILE 24 PERCENT OF THOSE PEOPLE ALWAYS KEPT THEIR GUNS LOADED, 62 PERCENT NEVER KEPT THEM LOADED AND 45 PERCENT KEPT THEM LOCKED UP. THIS IS ENCOURAGING AND MAYBE WE ARE LEARNING FROM ANDY GRIFFITH, WHO REQUIRED BARNEY FIFE TO ALWAYS CARRY HIS BULLET IN HIS POCKET INSTEAD OF IN HIS GUN, OR FROM

BARNEY MILLER, WHO WAS ALWAYS SHOWN UNLOADING HIS GUN AND LOCKING IT IN A CHEST WHEN HE ARRIVED HOME. THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT DEATH FROM ACCIDENTAL SHOOTINGS HAS DROPPED 40 PERCENT SINCE 1970.

AS I STATED EARLIER, THERE ARE MORE GUN DEATHS FROM SUICIDE THAN FROM HOMICIDE OR ACCIDENTAL SHOOTINGS. OVER THE LAST TEN TO FIFTEEN YEARS, THE NUMBER OF TEENAGE SUICIDES HAS GROWN RAPIDLY, AS WITH ADULTS. SIXTY TO SEVENTY PERCENT OF THESE SUICIDES ARE BY GUNS, USUALLY GUNS FOUND IN THE HOME. THIS STATISTIC NOW APPEARS TO BE HOLDING TRUE FOR BOTH FEMALES AND MALES, WHEREAS YEARS EARLIER IT DID NOT. IN MANY CASES, IF SUCH A LETHAL MEANS WAS NOT AVAILABLE, UNDOUBTEDLY THE NUMBER OF SUICIDES WOULD BE LESS. THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL AND DRUGS WILL WEAR OFF BEFORE A GUN CAN BE OBTAINED AND PASSIONS MAY COOL OFF ALSO. HOWEVER, IF A GUN IS READILY AVAILABLE, THE FATALITIES MAY OCCUR. UNFORTUNATELY, THE POSSIBILITY OF A HANDGUN BEING USED AS A METHOD FOR SUICIDE IS PROBABLY SOMETHING THAT MOST PEOPLE DO NOT CONSIDER BEFORE PLACING A GUN IN THEIR HOME.

IN LOOKING AT VARIOUS GUN CONTROL LAWS, OVERALL I HAVE NOT SEEN THAT THEY WERE VERY EFFECTIVE AT ALL ON CONTROLLING STREET CRIME. BUT, IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THERE IS ONE STUDY WHICH STUDIED SUICIDE RATES AND FOUND THAT THE STATES THAT HAD THE STRICTEST LAWS CONTROLLING GUNS HAD THE LOWEST SUICIDE RATES BY GUNS AND THEY HAD LOWER SUICIDE RATES OVERALL TOO, WHICH IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT SUGGESTS THAT PEOPLE DON'T SWITCH METHODS.

WE ALWAYS HEAR THE TRITE ARGUMENT THAT GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE, PEOPLE KILL PEOPLE, WHICH LED JOHN ED PIERCE TO SAY THAT IF GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE, WHY DON'T WE GIVE SOLDIERS FOUNTAIN PENS WHEN THEY GO TO WAR. ANOTHER WAS POINTED OUT THAT GUNS DON'T KILL PEOPLE, BULLETS DO, SO, WE SHOULD REGULATE THE BULLETS. MAYBE WE SHOULD NOT LICENSE GUNS BUT LICENSE PEOPLE. BY THAT, I MEAN YOU MIGHT REQUIRE EDUCATIONAL TRAINING ON THE USE OF WEAPONS, SAFETY PROCEDURES, PERHAPS EVEN IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AT LEAST IN THIS COMMUNITY. THEN, HAVE A REGULATION THAT REQUIRED ANY GUN PURCHASER TO SHOW EVIDENCE OF HAVING COMPLETED SUCH TRAINING BEFORE THEY CAN PURCHASE A GUN. A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION IN THIS COUNTRY HAS BEEN MADE TO THE FIELD OF GUN SAFETY BY THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION AND I WANT TO GIVE THEM CREDIT FOR THAT BEFORE I GET ON THEIR CASE. YOU HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR EFFORTS IN TRYING TO MAKE GUN OWNERS RESPONSIBLE AND SAFETY CONSCIOUS.

NOW GOING TO THE SUBJECT EVERYONE TENDS TO CENTER ON IN SPEAKING OF GUN CONTROL, AND THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF STREET CRIME. REGULATION WILL NOT EVER CONTROL ALL STREET CRIME. THE TWO AMERICAN CITIES HAVING THE TOUGHEST HANDGUN LAWS IN THE COUNTRY, WASHINGTON, D.C. AND NEW YORK CITY, STILL HAVE ITS GREATEST STREET CRIME PROBLEMS. WITH THE LARGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY INVOLVED IN DRUGS AND DRUG DEALING, NO AMOUNT OF REGULATION WILL PREVENT THOSE PEOPLE FROM OBTAINING AND USING FIREARMS. IT IS FOOLISH TO THINK THAT REGULATION WOULD EVER CONTROL THE HARD-CORE CRIMINAL. THE

NRA IS CORRECT IN STATING THAT PERSONS CONVICTED OF FIRE-ARMS' VIOLATIONS RARELY GO TO PRISON ON THAT CHARGE ALONE. IN THE ABSENCE OF A PERSON BEING CONVICTED OF USING THE FIREARM CRIMINALLY FOR A VIOLENT OFFENSE, HE WILL NOT GO TO PRISON BECAUSE, AS JUDGE WHITE'S PAPER DISCUSSED, THERE IS NOT ENOUGH ROOM IN THE PRISONS TO HOUSE ALL THOSE CONVICTED OF CRIMES AND THE PRIORITY APPEARS TO GO TO PLACING THE VIOLENT OFFENDERS IN PRISON AND, THEREFORE, A NON-VIOLENT FIREARM VIOLATION IS NOT LIKELY TO SEND SOMEONE TO JAIL.

HOWEVER, IT IS NOT UNREASONABLE TO THINK THAT THE BORDERLINE CASES WHERE YOU WOULD HAVE TO COMMIT PERJURY AND WAIT SEVEN DAYS TO SEE IF YOU GOT CAUGHT BEFORE GETTING A WEAPON, WOULD NOT PREVENT SOME GUNS FROM FALLING INTO HANDS WHERE THEY WOULD NOT OTHERWISE RECEIVE THEM. THE SEVEN DAY WAIT MAY ALSO RESULT IN THE CHANGE OF ATTITUDE OR SITUATION, CONTRARY TO WHAT THE NRA SAYS, IT DOES NOT HURT THE LEGITIMATE CITIZEN TO WAIT SEVEN DAYS. HOPEFULLY, IT WOULD PREVENT SOME DEATHS AND PERHAPS A LITTLE CRIME. IT SEEMS LIKE IT IS PROBABLY WORTH A TRY ANYWAY.

GETTING BACK TO REGULATION IN GENERAL, AS I STATED EARLIER, AS TECHNOLOGY CHANGES, REGULATIONS ARE GOING TO HAVE TO CHANGE. AT THE SAME TIME, AS TECHNOLOGY CHANGES, THE ENFORCEMENT OF REGULATIONS COULD BE MORE EFFECTIVE. IN THE COMPUTER AGE, ALMOST IMMEDIATE CHECKS CAN BE MADE NOW ONCE MACHINERY IS IN PLACE ON ANY APPLICANT FOR A GUN. THE TECHNOLOGY IS AVAILABLE AND IS EXPECTED TO BE USABLE IN A FEW YEARS WHERE THAT A POSITIVE ID CAN BE HAD ON A GUN

PURCHASER BY WAY OF A FINGER PRINT OR THUMB PRINT, SO WHAT WE MUST DO IS KEEP IN MIND THAT AS THESE TIMES CHANGE, OUR POSITIONS MAY HAVE TO CHANGE. HOWEVER, TO ADOPT ONE POSITION OR ANOTHER TO BE TOTALLY IMMOVABLE IS UNREALISTIC.

THE NRA BY TAKING THE POSITION IT HAS TAKEN ON ANY REGULATION OF ANY WEAPON APPEARS TO HAVE LOST TOUCH WITH EVEN THE GUN OWNERS. THEIR BUDGET SPENT LOBBYING CONTINUES TO INCREASE AND WHILE THE BUDGET FOR SAFETY AND TRAINING TENDS TO DECLINE. IN 1988, THEY SPENT 4.7 MILLION DOLLARS IN POLITICAL RACES. YOU EITHER HAVE TO AGREE WITH THEM 100 PERCENT OR YOU ARE AGAINST THEM. THEIR LOBBYING AND CAMPAIGNING IS NOT LIMITED TO AN ARGUMENT OF THE QUESTION ON ITS MERITS, BUT SINKS TO A VINDICTIVE LEVEL OF TRYING TO PUNISH ANYONE THEY PERCEIVE AS OPPOSITION BY ANY MEANS THEY CAN. I HAVE WATCHED THEIR NATIONAL SPOKESMAN REPEATEDLY IGNORE LEGITIMATE QUESTIONS AND, IN EFFECT, RESPOND THAT ANY REGULATION SHOULD HAVE TO BE SHOWN TO BE 100 PERCENT EFFECTIVE TO STOP CRIME BEFORE IT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED. THIS TYPE OF IMAGE IS BADLY ERRODING THAT ORGANIZATION'S CREDIBILITY. I THINK THAT IS EVIDENT BY THE FACT THAT THE HERETOFORE CONSERVATIVE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE AND THE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN POLICE CHIEFS ARE LOBBYING FOR LEGISLATION TO REGULATE ASSAULT WEAPONS AND PUTTING THE SEVEN DAY WAITING PERIOD FOR A CRIMINAL AND MENTAL CHECK.

OVERALL, THE REGULATION DEBATE AND EVEN THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS THAT PASSED PROBABLY ARE NOT GOING TO

HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON THE NUMBER OF DEATHS THAT OCCUR THROUGH FIREARMS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. IN REALITY, THIS IS PROBABLY MORE CORRECTLY ADDRESSED AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM. THE GOVERNMENT IS AFRAID TO FUND STUDIES AND RESEARCH NEEDED TO DETERMINE HOW BEST TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM BECAUSE OF ITS FEAR OF THE NRA. PERHAPS OUR SOCIETY IS CONSIDERED A VIOLENT SOCIETY AND OUR MOVIES GLAMORIZE VIOLENCE. THIS IS AN ARGUMENT THE NRA HAS MADE. HOWEVER, ALL THE AMERICAN MOVIES MADE IN THIS COUNTRY ARE GENERALLY SHOWN AROUND THE WORLD AND IT HAS NOT AFFECTED OTHER SOCIETIES. MAYBE THE AVAILABILITY OF GUNS HERE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE.

GUNS CAUSE A LOT OF DEATHS IN THIS COUNTRY AND CAUSE MORE DEATHS AMONG THE BLACKS THAN THE WHITES AND AMONG THE POOR THAN THE RICH. IT IS AN ISSUE THAT CANNOT BE ADDRESSED TOTALLY ON A CRIME VERSUS CRIME PREVENTION LEVEL. IT MUST BE ADDRESSED OVERALL AS A MATTER OF NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH. TO MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF SUCH DEATHS, IS FIRST GOING TO REQUIRE MORE EDUCATION SO THAT THE GUN OWNERS WILL BE MORE RESPONSIBLE WHICH WOULD CUT DOWN ON THE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTAL DEATHS, DOMESTIC HOMICIDE AND PERHAPS SUICIDE. A SEVEN DAY WAITING PERIOD AND A CHARACTER CHECK WILL NOT HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT, IF ANY, ON THE HARD-CORE CRIMINAL, BUT IT MAY DETER OTHERS WHO ARE ACTING OUT OF PASSION OR INSANITY AND IT IS NOT AN UNDUE BURDEN FOR THE LEGITIMATE CITIZEN. IT IS ALSO DIFFICULT TO SEE WHERE THE ORDINARY CITIZEN NEEDS AN AUTOMATIC MILITARY

ASSAULT TYPE WEAPON FOR PROTECTION OR HUNTING. IF A LEGITIMATE USE AND NEED COULD BE DEMONSTRATED, I WOULD THINK IT SHOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT TO DEVISE A LAW OR REGULATION SO THAT THE LEGITIMATE NEEDS COULD BE MET. BUT IF ANY HEADWAY IS TO BE MADE ON THE PROBLEM, IT MUST BE MADE BY BOTH SIDES CONSIDERING THE PROBLEM AT ALL OF THE LEVELS RATHER THAN ONE. YOU CANNOT LUMP TOGETHER THE FOUR-YEAR OLD WHO KILLS HIS PLAYMATE OR PARENT WITH AN UNLOADED GUN, THE TEENAGE SUICIDE, THE DOMESTIC HOMICIDES, AND THE HARD-CORE CRIMINALS AND DRUG DEALERS. THEY ALL REQUIRE DIFFERENT APPROACHES.