

# THE Gun Owners

28 YEARS OF NO COMPROMISE – 1975-2003

## Rep. Hostettler Carry Bill Gaining Momentum

by John Velleco

Washington, D.C. -- More Americans than usual took to the highways this summer, many leaving their home states to vacation with family and friends.

Surveys since 9/11/01 indicate that more people are choosing driving over flying, not surprising considering the long lines, extra time, and annoying groping of senior citizens and toddlers at the nations' airports.

As people travel, one consideration many gun owners face is whether or not the state they are visiting will recognize their concealed carry permit.

Doubtless, many permit holders unwittingly violate concealed carry laws as they seek to protect themselves and loved ones away from home.

Worse still, how many decent citizens leave their most effective means of self-defense at home so as not to run afoul of the unconstitutional restrictions placed on them by the government?

Pro-gun Rep. John Hostettler has long sought to rectify this situation. This year, the Indiana Republican reintroduced a bill, H.R. 990, which recognizes that one does not forfeit the Second Amendment simply by driving over a state line.

Rep. Hostettler's bill states that a person entitled to carry a concealed firearm in his home state may also carry in any other state.

Relying on the Full Faith and Credit clause of Article IV,



GOA Communications Director Erich Pratt (left) took on the head of Handgun-Free America during a TV debate in July. Pratt explained that the recent slaying of a Brooklyn councilman is yet another example showing the failure of gun control. See the related story below.

Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution, H.R. 990 seeks to treat CCW permits in the same manner as marriage and drivers licenses.

### Support Overwhelming for Concealed Carry

In the 2002 Gun Owners of America year-end survey, an overwhelming majority of GOA members agreed that removing barriers to carrying concealed firearms would serve to lower America's crime rate.

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## Gun Control Fails Again

by Erich Pratt

In late July, there was another murder in New York City.

Now, murder in the Big Apple doesn't usually make national headlines. What made this killing so unique was the fact that the killer smuggled his gun into City Hall and killed a councilman.

Othniel Askew was a political rival of the victim, Brooklyn Councilman James Davis. The two were engaged in conversation and walked into City Hall together.

As a councilman, Davis was not required to walk through the metal

detectors, and in a gesture of good will, he waved Askew around the magnetometer with him.

Moments later when they were alone, Askew drew his weapon and fatally shot Davis seven times.

### Lessons learned

While this is not the first time that a shooting has occurred in a city hall, the Brady Bunch might be embarrassed to see where other such shootings have *not* taken place.

Shootings have *not* occurred in the city halls where citizens can carry con-

cealed permits. Several states allow their citizens to bring firearms with them as they visit local councilmen or

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### Inside:

- See how GOA's website can give you detailed voting information on your Congressman (page 5)

## Carry Bill

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While such a suggestion is anathema to the anti-gun establishment, it is supported by a growing body of evidence.

In what remains the most comprehensive study to date on the subject, Professor John Lott's analysis of crime data from every county in the nation shows that allowing citizens to carry concealed firearms will lead to lower crime rates.

Dr. Lott's research confirms that laws of economics apply to the realm of crime. By increasing the 'cost' to the criminal, in this case increasing the likelihood of coming up against an armed victim, the number of criminals willing to confront victims directly will decrease.

Furthermore, the drop in crime rates is the most dramatic in the more metropolitan areas.

Lott wrote in his book, *More Guns, Less Crime*, that "[T]he largest drops in violent crime from legalized concealed handguns occurred in the most urban counties with the greatest populations and the highest crime rates."

Should it be enacted into law, the statistical and empirical evidence demonstrate that allowing concealed carry permit holders to carry nationwide would lead to a dramatic decrease in crime.

H.R. 990 would do that, but the Hostettler bill also looks forward to a day when law-abiding citizens can carry a firearm without a government issued permission slip.

### Alaska recognizes real concealed carry for its citizens

Recently, the Alaska legislature passed a law allowing the citizens of that state to carry concealed without first having to obtain a government issued permit.

No special fee or tax levied on gun owners; no onerous paperwork requirements; no permitting system that transforms a right into a privilege; no denials of self-protection by anti-gun bureaucrats.

In short, the measure treats Alaskans as citizens who have an inherent right to possess firearms instead of being treated as subjects who must approach the government like beggars seeking



**Pro-gun Rep. John Hostettler (R-IN) has introduced legislation that will require states to recognize the right of out-of-state citizens to carry concealed firearms.**

approval to exercise the 'privilege' of carrying a firearm.

Alaska is only the second state to allow its citizens to carry concealed without a permit. Vermont, which consistently ranks among the safest states in the country, also does not require a permit to carry.

Allowing people to carry concealed without government interference is not only consistent with the Second Amendment, but it is rational as well.

Most people are not criminals, and criminals hold the law in low regard. Therefore, the only people who are willing to submit to the hassles of getting a permit are honest people seeking to live within the confines of the law. The criminal, meanwhile, simply tucks a gun in his waistband and goes on his way.

This situation begs an obvious question: if only the good guys get permits and the criminals just carry guns without permits, what is the real benefit of a licensing system?

Of course, being able to carry with a permit is better than not being able to carry at all, but gun owners should not be lulled into thinking a permit system is optimum.

### Beyond Reciprocity

What happened in Alaska holds significance for the rest of the country. A legislative body has sent the message to its constituents that people have a right

to carry firearms without any government interference.

The drafters of the Second Amendment never envisioned that millions of Americans would have to submit to a permitting system, which often includes fingerprints and other requirements that treat gun owners more like sex offenders than honest, decent Americans.

The Alaska law did leave in place a permit, however, for the express purpose of reciprocity with other states. If an Alaskan wants to take advantage of a reciprocal agreement between Alaska and another state, the person must still obtain a permit to do so.

While not needing a permit to carry within the borders of one's own state is a huge step forward for gun rights, any person who travels to a neighboring state still must deal with the reciprocity issue.

Any federal reciprocity bill that requires a permit system, therefore, will force states to keep its permit system in place.

For this reason, the Hostettler bill pushes beyond reciprocity to recognition.

H.R. 990, like other reciprocity bills, does make valid permits from any state valid in any other state. But Rep. Hostettler's bill goes farther, by allowing recognition for any person "entitled to carry a concealed firearm in and pursuant to the law of the State of the person's residence."

If a person were allowed to carry without a permit in his home state, that person would be allowed to carry in all states.

Under the Hostettler bill, therefore, a state like Alaska would have no reason to keep a permit system in place at all and a state such as Vermont would not be punished for refusing to place firearms restrictions on its citizens.

Reciprocity that relies on a permit system keeps states like Alaska from taking that final step towards real firearms liberty.

As states continue to debate whether to require a permit at all, the Hostettler bill provides no disincentive at the federal level for true firearms freedom.

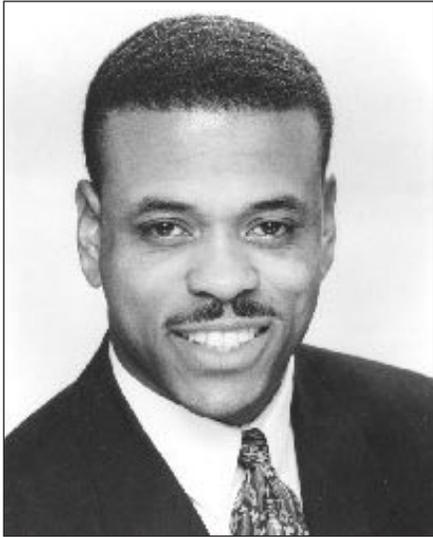
Currently, H.R. 990 has 60 cosponsors in the U.S. House of Representatives but remains stuck in the Judiciary Committee. GOA will continue to push to bring this bill to the House floor for a vote. ■

## Gun Control Fails

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supervisors. But none of these decent folks have used their guns to kill an official. None. Zip. Zilch.

Dr. John Lott, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, notes that all the city hall shootings since



**A killer evaded multiple gun laws in July and smuggled a weapon into the city hall in New York City to murder Councilman James Davis (above).**

1950 have occurred in buildings where guns are banned. The New York City Hall shooting was no exception.

The police and the security guards were supposed to be the only ones armed in the building. Average citizens and bad guys are not supposed to have guns in there -- let alone in the rest of the city.

But is it any surprise that a bad guy who is bent on committing murder -- a violation of the law -- is also going to disregard a ban on carrying firearms?

The city gun ban obviously didn't stop Askew from illegally possessing a firearm, nor did his criminal record prevent him from buying a gun from a store in North Carolina.

### Gun free zones an invitation to criminals

Not only do guys like Askew seem to get around gun bans, they also seem to prefer "gun free zones" to do their dirty work.

In a *New York Post* editorial, Dr. Lott posed the question: "Suppose a crimi-

nal is stalking you or your family. Would you feel safe putting a sign in front of your home saying, 'This Home Is a Gun-Free Zone'? Law-abiding citizens might be pleased by such a sign, but to criminals it is an invitation."

It only makes sense. Criminals may be evil, but they are not stupid. They generally don't want people shooting back at them when they commit their crimes.

Which is why they often target "gun free zones" to perpetrate their crimes.

Who ever heard of a burglar targeting homes with signs in their windows saying, *This Home Protected by Smith & Wesson?* Gun free zones -- like schools, airplanes and city halls -- don't seem to keep bad guys from getting guns and only give them a "safer working environment."

### Guns prevent multiple homicides

There is an irony to this whole New York City affair.

The victim, James Davis, was the only councilman in the legislature who had a concealed carry permit. Davis, a former cop, was even armed when Askew began pumping lead into his rival.

Some in the Brady Bunch camp have argued Davis' gun was no use to him at that moment, and that, likewise, guns are an ineffective deterrent.

Of course, this ignores the almost 7,000 citizens who use firearms to defend themselves each day.

It also ignores the fact that, not infrequently, policemen are gunned down with their service pieces still in their holsters. Does this mean that their guns are ineffective?

Hardly. There will always be times when a thug surprises a good guy and gets the jump on him. What's noteworthy is the fact that good guys with guns frequently prevent multiple murders from taking place.

Even in the New York City Hall shooting, it was a plain-clothes cop with a concealed firearm who killed Askew before he could turn his gun on anyone else. This kind of ending is not unheard of in recent history:

- After two Mississippi students were killed at Pearl Junior High School in 1997, Vice-Principal Joel Myrick used his gun to disarm the gunman and stop him from killing further students.
- Israeli citizens, a large percentage of whom carry arms, have frequently shot and killed Palestinian terrorists before they are able to execute their planned massacres.
- And early last year after a gunman killed three people on a law school campus in Grundy, Virginia, two students grabbed their firearms and stopped him from killing additional victims.

Right now, only the privileged class generally gets permission to carry firearms in New York City. Actors like Robert De Niro and Harvey Keitel, shock-jocks Howard Stern and Don Imus, and developer Donald Trump are some of the elite who enjoy the right to carry a gun.

Too bad. Until more good guys can carry guns in the Big Apple, the same ole' pattern will continue: criminals will get guns (despite the laws) and the majority of law-abiding citizens will be sitting ducks.■

## Has Your Business Supported GOA with a Tax-Deductible Ad?



GOA has started an area on its website -- <http://www.gunowners.org/adpage.htm> -- for companies to take out advertisements. These ads are tax deductible for the business as a normal advertising expense and they give them exposure to thousands of visitors each day.

We encourage you to visit that section and support those businesses that are supporting GOA. Also, if you have a business of your own, or know of a business or foundation that might be interested in supporting GOA with their advertising dollars, you can use the e-mail address -- [goamarketing@earthlink.net](mailto:goamarketing@earthlink.net) -- to get more information. You can also call Marty Ohlson at 920-625-3975.■

# Is Your School's Curriculum UN Approved?

by Larry Pratt

Does it seem somewhat far out to ask such a question? Would that it were so.

The United Nations that wants your guns also wants your children and grandchildren to learn the "benefits" of gun control.

Incredibly, the United States is working with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to federalize the curriculum of all schools in the United States. The new curriculum would be one that conforms to other countries as well as to UNESCO.

We already do have federal curriculum standards for civics that encompass the teaching of history, geography, social studies and civics. Indeed, there are federal standards for other disciplines as well. The standards are referred to in Washington newspeak as guidelines.

The guidelines have resulted in a subsidized textbook (\$10 a copy) entitled *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution*. If a school district does not use this textbook, whatever they teach from must teach to the national tests that reflect the federal "guidelines." The Department of Education is warning states that if they do not have enough students passing the federally approved tests, they will lose their federal subsidies.

The guidelines and *We the People* are so busy teaching multiculturalism and environmentalism that they have no time for teaching the Tenth Amendment, which severely limits the legitimate activity of the federal government.

Is that a surprise to anyone?

*We the People* does mention the Second Amendment in the section on historical development. But it gets the student to start questioning the wisdom of the amendment, asking the student whether the right to keep and bear arms is still "important today" as it was in the eighteenth century and to decide what "limitations" should be placed on the right.

It's bad enough that the major news media, along with TV shows and movies, present a one-sided view of the right to keep and bear arms. Kids growing up today are bombarded with



anti-gun sentiments and viewpoints, with little facts or information to the contrary.

It has often been said that today's children are the leaders of

tomorrow. One trembles in considering the perspectives these future leaders will hold when it comes to the Bill of Rights, and specifically, the Second Amendment.

As control over education becomes more and more federalized, it seems that the ideas which children are learning become more and more radical.

And now, it turns out, we are reporting on our progress at wiping out local and state control over curriculum to the UN! Here it is off the UNESCO web site on the USA country report page ([http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/usa/rapport\\_2.html](http://www2.unesco.org/wef/countryreports/usa/rapport_2.html)):

Most countries have national curricula.... In the United States, however, education is managed at the state and local levels.... Thus, the very concept of designing and agreeing on a set of learning outcomes across traditional jurisdictional lines is new, and in the minds of many, unsettling and undesirable.

The UN is saying that they are aware of the political sensitivity of a nationalized education system. This explains

the following reference to not letting the American voter in on what "us elitists" are pulling off:

Officials of the U.S. Department of Education, as well as presidents Bush and Clinton, have applauded the emergence of [curriculum] standards at the state level and in the various subject areas, but they understand that any suggestion that these were being imposed by Washington would unleash a political backlash.

And for the pleasure of One World groupies is this gem from the same page: "Consciousness is thus growing among U.S. educators that... [e]ducational outcomes must now meet not only national but international standards."

I wonder what countries might be the model for setting UN educational standards? Perhaps some of the countries which have trained children to be compliant workers and citizens who do just what they are told. The mind thrills to consider the array of choice: from Cuba to Zimbabwe with Iran and Libya along the way.

Rep. Ron Paul is right. So are the other 73 Representatives who voted with Paul to get the UN out of the US and the US out of the UN.

Being run from Washington is bad enough, but being run by the UN is the end of the road to perdition.■

## Charlie Daniels on Guns



***"Almost everybody owned at least one gun, usually a rifle or a shotgun, and all the males in my family were hunters. I was taught gun safety at a very early age, and I would have no more thought about bothering with a gun than I would have thought about picking up a snake. I just knew better."***

-- Country music legend Charlie Daniels on teaching gun safety to children, from his recently published book, *Ain't No Rag: Freedom, Family, and the Flag*

## HIT THE RIGHT TARGET! Give to Gun Owners Foundation

In many federal offices there are subtle (and sometimes not so subtle) pressures to give to the Combined Federal Campaign. Your boss may think his prestige depends upon getting everyone to kick in. The same thing happens in all too many corporations during the United Way fundraising drive.

You may have wanted to give but couldn't find a group that wasn't attacking your rights, let alone defending them, on the list of participating organizations. But that has all changed!

Federal employees now are able to designate **Gun Owners Foundation (GOF)** as the recipient of their gifts to the Combined Federal Campaign. Use **Agency Number 1054** for **Gun Owners Foundation** when you make your Combined Federal Campaign pledge or donation. Your gifts will go toward helping our legal assistance program protect the Second Amendment rights of Americans across the nation.

Also, if you work for a company that participates in the United Way, you too, may be able to designate that your gift be to **Gun Owners Foundation**. Many local United Way Campaigns allow **Gun Owners Foundation** to participate through their Donor Choice Programs. Some, however, do not. Check with your local United Way Agency. You will not only be helping people and protecting your rights, but you will also get a tax deduction.

Of course, anyone can always make a tax-deductible donation at any time to **Gun Owners Foundation** by sending the contribution directly to 8001 Forbes Place, Suite 102, Springfield, VA 22151.

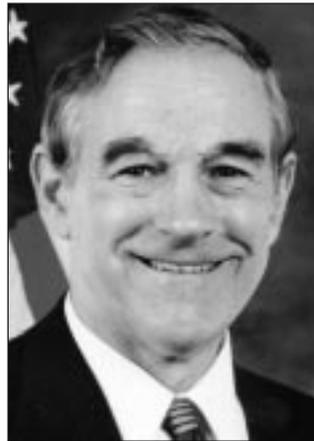
One additional note. If you are employed by a corporation or organization which has a Matching Gift Program, please keep **GOF** in mind when making your donation. Thank you very much.



## Recent Gun Votes Posted on GOA's Website!

**Stop frivolous anti-gun lawsuits.** The House of Representatives passed legislation that would prohibit frivolous lawsuits against gun manufacturers and dealers. The bill is not a "silver bullet" as it does contain two broad exceptions which could be used as the grounds for a lawsuit. The bill (H.R. 1036) is still a good step forward and passed 285-140 on April 9, 2003.

**Get the U.S. out of the anti-gun U.N.** Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) offered an amendment on July 15, 2003 which would have pulled the United States out of the United Nations. While his amendment failed, Rep. Paul argued that this country should boycott the international gun control organization which is actively taking guns away from civilians and trying to determine our gun laws. "It wants to ignore our Bill of Rights and try American citizens in its phony international courts," Paul said. "At some point, the American people will have to choose between American national sovereignty and an increasingly powerful UN global government."



**Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) has forced two gun-related votes this year.**

**Cut off taxpayer funds to anti-gun U.N.E.S.C.O.** On July 22, 2003, Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) offered an amendment that would have ended our financial support of a global agency that is funding a radical educational agenda, and is bent on inculcating "global values" into America's children. The United Nation's educational organization (U.N.E.S.C.O.) has been trying to "construct a U.N.-based school curriculum for American schools," Paul said. From its inception U.N.E.S.C.O. has been "openly hostile" to American values, our Constitution, and our Bill of Rights (especially the Second Amendment). "Why in the world should we send tax dollars to an organization that actively promotes values so contrary to those of most Americans," Paul asked. While the amendment failed, it did garner 145 votes. ■

### Go online to see how your Rep. voted

You can see how your individual Congressman voted recently on these three issues by going to [www.gunowners.org/108hvot.htm](http://www.gunowners.org/108hvot.htm). Archives of all gun votes in recent congresses can be found at <http://www.gunowners.org/cgv.htm>.

# More Lunacy in Great Britain

by *Erich Pratt*

Idiocy in the mother country has recently taken center stage.

As unflattering news has trickled out of England this summer, the world was once again reminded just how crazy gun banners can be.

## Item Number One: Punishing victims, not criminals

Tony Martin was released from jail in August after spending three years behind bars.

Who is Tony Martin and what was his "crime"?

Mr. Martin is the Norfolk farmer who after being burglarized many, many times, decided that he had been a victim long enough.

After two career thugs broke into his home in 1999, Martin used his shotgun to kill one of the attackers and wound the second.

Unfortunately for Martin, his self-defense use of the shotgun was illegal in a country that has virtually banned any piece of steel that can fire a projectile.

Instead of letting this action send a message to criminals all over Great Britain, the justice system convicted Martin of murder and initially sentenced him to life in prison.

While his sentence was later reduced to five years, Martin still pursued other opportunities for early release. But he received a setback earlier this year when he was denied parole.

The reason? According to British papers, the Parole Board considered Martin a "danger to burglars."

No, that is not a typo. The Parole Board didn't say Martin would be a danger to the "neighbors" or to the "children." They said he would be a danger -- of all people -- to burglars!!!

His fortunes have taken somewhat of a positive upswing lately, when he was released after serving only two-thirds of his sentence.

But Tony Martin is still upset, and you can imagine why.

As if to send a message to any future "lawbreakers" who would shoot burglars in their homes, the thug shot by Martin was released from jail three days before he was. And Martin is now being sued by this guy for damages



**Tony Martin was initially sentenced to life in prison for slaying a burglar in his home in Norfolk, England. Thankfully, he was released from jail early this past July.**

resulting from leg injuries he sustained "on the job."

Yes, those would be the leg injuries he sustained when breaking into Mr. Martin's home.

It doesn't get any weirder than that.

## Item Number Two: Police outgunned

For decades, English Bobbies prided themselves on the fact that they could police their streets with no firearms, using only nightsticks. Well, that's changed throughout much of the country, as cops have been forced to arm themselves to meet the rising crime threat.

But in some localities, they still can't bring themselves to use real guns.

In five areas of the country, police are experimenting with non-lethal weapons such as the Taser, which delivers 50,000 volts of electricity into the person being apprehended.

Well, how is that experiment going?

Judging by its debut, not too well.

Police just west of London used a Taser for the first time in early August with horrendous results. While outnumbered by police, the bad guy still had greater firepower on his person, wielding two handguns and several grenades.

Imagine that . . . a criminal with handguns and grenades. Aren't those weapons illegal in Great Britain?

Anyway, police fired a Taser into the thug, with no success. Police were then forced to fire another "less lethal" weapon, the plastic baton round, which seemed to do the trick.

What went wrong with the Taser? Well, the device launches two needle-tipped barbs, which are attached to copper cables, at a distance of up to 21 feet. Both barbs must make contact near the offender's skin for the device to work effectively.

Scotland Yard is investigating the reasons for the Taser's failure to work.

## Item Number Three: Crime continues to increase

Criminals still haven't gotten the message that the private possession of handguns is completely banned in England.

When two teenage girls were gunned down this summer, the Home Office took that opportunity to report that gun crimes throughout the country have been way up this year.

Unfortunately for them, this is not a new trend.

After banning handguns completely in 1997, England has seen its crime rate soar through the roof:

- According to the *BBC News* (July 16, 2001), handgun crime in the United Kingdom rose by 40% in the two years after it passed its draconian gun ban in 1997.
- A United Nations study reported last year that the crime rate in the U.K. is now higher than any of the top 17 industrialized nations -- including the United States. The study is available by going to [www.gunowners.org/sourcetb.htm](http://www.gunowners.org/sourcetb.htm) on the GOA website.

No wonder that London Mayor Ken Livingstone stated last year that he feels safer in New York City than he does in London.

Police estimate there are more than three million illegal guns in criminal hands. It makes one wonder: if a total gun ban can't work on an island, just how effective are lesser forms of gun control going to be in the United States, where there are already millions of guns in people's homes?■

# Rep. Renzi Introduces Bill to Support Firearms Dealers

by John Velleco

Pro-gun freshman Rep. Rick Renzi (R-AZ) recently introduced legislation that will directly benefit the nation's 100,000 firearms dealers and their customers.

Currently, a federally licensed firearms dealer (FFL) cannot conduct a face-to-face transfer of a handgun with another FFL if the licensees are from different states.

Two licensees from different states who meet at a trade show, for instance, can initiate a sale. But instead of handing over the firearm at the completion of the transaction, the two must return to their home states of business and ship the firearm from one business address to the other.

"A person who has already received a federal license from the government and who has passed extensive background checks, and voluntarily submits to random inspections of his business premise and records by government



GOA Executive Director Larry Pratt meets with Rep. Rick Renzi (R-AZ).

agents, should be able to simply transfer a firearm to another dealer," Rep. Renzi said.

In a letter to his House colleagues, Rep. Renzi pointed out that this policy forces lawful firearms dealers "to ship the firearm, which is handled by perhaps a dozen individuals until it finally

arrives at the business destination.

"Obviously, this creates a situation where chances are dramatically increased that valuable firearms can be lost, damaged or stolen. In fact, to address these very issues, most commercial shipping companies only ship firearms by next day air, placing a cost burden on businesses."

Of course, this makes the bill of interest to gun owners who aren't dealers, as well. Such extra costs must ultimately be passed on to the consumer. Thus, gun owners across the country are footing the bill for this bureaucratic nonsense.

Rep. Renzi's bill, H.R. 2906, will remove the federally mandated obstacle to the interstate sales of firearms between FFLs, allowing dealers to simply transfer a firearm at the completion of a sale.

The bill has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee and is awaiting action. ■

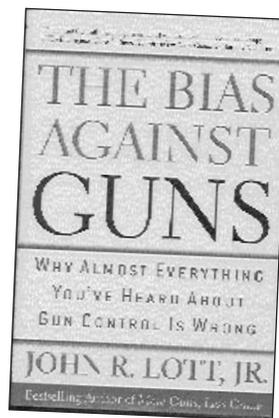
## Media Bias on Guns

The unbalanced reporting is probably greatest in cases in which children die from accidental gunshots. Most people have seen the public-service ads with pictures or voices of children between the ages of four and eight, never over the age of eight, and the impression is that there is an epidemic of accidental deaths involving children.

The truth is that in 1999, 31 children younger than 10 died from an accidental gunshot and only six of these cases appear to have involved another child under 10 as the culprit. Nor was this year unusual.

Any death is tragic, but with 90-some million Americans owning guns and about 40 million children younger than 10, it is hard to think of any other product in the home that represents such a low risk to children. Indeed, more children under five drowned in bathtubs or plastic water buckets.

-- John R. Lott, Jr., writing in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (August 1, 2003). Dr. Lott is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and the author of *The Bias Against Guns*. His book is available for \$20 on the GOA website at <http://www.gunowners.com/bookst.htm>.



## Background Checks

Continued from page 8

Of course, a potential gun buyer could be dead following an erroneous denial because she could not get her name cleared in time to defend herself from a stalker.

And all of this expense and aggravation for a system that is no more effective than the Canadian gun registry in solving crimes or preventing them. Every time you hear a statistic about how many people were supposedly kept from getting a gun by the instant background check, remember that criminals get all the guns they want in England, which has imposed a near-total gun ban on the island nation.

Rather than do background checks on citizens, including reporters, would it not be more in keeping with the spirit of our Constitution to do criminal background checks on politicians? ■



# Media Catching On To Dangers Of Background Checks

by Larry Pratt

There is a growing trend in American government centers to treat journalists like criminals -- and like gun owners.

*The Illinois Leader*, an Internet daily news site, reports that at the Pennsylvania capitol in Harrisburg, reporters will not be issued an annual access card unless they submit to an annual criminal background check. The "compromise" that was worked out was to have their employers carry out the checks.

Chicago's city government is requiring fingerprints and criminal background checks also. The Chicago Police Department claims they will not keep this information, but a law long on the books requires this information to be on file before reporters get their access credentials.

*The Illinois Leader* quotes a reporter asking these excellent questions:

Who would have access to these background checks? It's hard for me to believe the police department will do background checks and not put that information in a file. Who will get it? An alderman with a grudge? Even if there's nothing illegal [in the background check], who knows what will show up? You should see the messages I'm getting from members. The scenarios are endless.

The scenarios are indeed endless. Now, let's consider the Brady Instant Background Check. The law requires destruction of the information about a gun purchaser once the government has given permission to exercise the right to have a gun. (Note: the previous sentence was intended to underscore the clear unconstitutionality and irreconcilability of rights and freedoms, as some journalists are beginning to understand.)

However, there is no evidence that the records have been destroyed from the 1998 inception of the background check. Not exactly a faithful compliance with the law, but who is to police the police?

The reporter's questions would seem to be equally relevant to gun owners' records. Since the FBI, which maintains the records on computers in Clarksburg, WV, appears to be flagrantly violating the no-retention law, why would it not allow some politician to abuse the records? The FBI gave files on politicians to the Clinton White House, so mere citizens should have no illusion about the integrity of any illegally maintained records.

Or, perhaps, the FBI might decide to give their gun owner registry names in a particular state to officials in that state. When the BATF

was maintaining the criminal records system they did just that years ago in California.

The federal registration list was used by police to go door-to-door in the Maryland suburbs of Washington during the Beltway Snipers' rampage in 2002. They thought they would find the crime gun in somebody's home. In fact, they found the crime gun the way they almost always do -- with the criminal at the time of apprehension.

Canada has registered handguns since 1934 and has never, ever, not even once, solved a crime with its registry. This was pointed out by Canadian Member of Parliament, Gary Breitkreuz, in my *Live Fire* interview with him (<http://gunowners.org/radio.htm>). But as New York City showed us a few years ago, guns that have been registered can be confiscated when the government decides to leave its citizens defenseless.

To return to the reporter quoted by *The Illinois Leader*: "But there is almost unanimous concern about how the information would be used and who will be excluded." Gun owners might wonder if anti-self-defense bureaucrats in the FBI might plant disqualifying information in many of the files in their computers. It would be easy for them to do, and very difficult and costly for the gun owner to prove his innocence.

Already, that has been a problem for gun owners seeking the government's permission to exercise their right to get a gun. There is lots of bad information in the government's criminal database that unfairly accuses gun owners of having a criminal record.

Airline travelers are facing the same problem, and when their name makes a suspected terrorist list, many have missed their flights because of all the scrutiny to which they were subjected.

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## THE Gun Owners

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