

July 22, 2003

Immunity for Gun Industry Passes House, Gains Strength in the Senate

Proposed legislation HR 1036 and S 659 would grant the gun industry immunity from civil lawsuits. The bills prohibit most lawsuits (in any Federal or State court) against negligent manufacturers and dealers of guns and ammunition. Also, both bills require immediate dismissal of any pending cases. Limited lawsuits are allowed in a handful of the most glaring cases of recklessness by dealers or manufacturers. Currently, HR 1036 has passed the House and is waiting for consideration of the Senate version (S 659). It is unclear when the bill will be seen on the Senate floor for a vote, but it will most likely be after July. Until then, the gun industry is lobbying Senators to gain their support in an attempt to ensure the 60 votes needed to override a filibuster.

Contact your Senators and ask them to oppose S 659. Senators will be in DC through the end of July and then in their local offices for the August recess. **Please write letters to your Senators asking for their opposition or thanking them for their position against this bill.**

- Ask local organizations write letters of opposition to S 659 on their own letterhead.
- Solicit local elected officials (mayors, county commissioners, state officials, etc) to send letter to Senators.
- Write an op-ed or editorial for your local paper.

Check <http://thomas.loc.gov/> to find out if your Senator has agreed to cosponsor the bill.

Target the following Senators: **Pryor** (AR), **Lincoln** (AR) [She is already a cosponsor, but has expressed some concern so should still be contacted.] **McCain** (AZ), **Carper** (DE), **Fitzgerald** (IL), **Bayh** (IN), **Lugar** (IN), **DeWine** (OH), **Dayton** (MN), **Bingaman** (NM), **Conrad** (ND), **Dorgan** (ND) [He is already a cosponsor, but should still be contacted], **Daschle** (SD), **Johnson** (SD) [Already a cosponsor but should still hear from you.], **Leahy** (VT), **Jeffords** (VT), **Warner** (VA), **Byrd** (WV), **Rockefeller** (WV).

Cosponsors **Breaux and Landrieu** (LA) and **Reid** (NV) should continue to be pressed. Both have made statements expressing some concern about the comprehensiveness of the bill. They worry the bill covers dealers, not just manufacturers, thus preventing individual lawsuits, not just state and city lawsuits.

The Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office joins with more than 200 consumer, children's, civil rights, domestic violence, faith-based, law enforcement, and gun violence prevention organizations in voicing concern for the proposed gun industry immunity legislation. We believe such legislation will deny victims of gun violence their

legal right to seek justice in the court system. The proposed legislation will block suits that attempt to hold the gun industry accountable for irresponsible manufacturing or selling of guns. It also prevents lawsuits that hold manufacturers and sellers accountable for reckless selling and supplying of guns to criminals.

In addition, we have concern that this proposed legislation gives the gun industry special protection from the law. No other industry enjoys this legal protection and passing such legislation will set a poor precedent and double standard.

In opposing this legislation, we attempt to make gun products safer and prevent distribution to criminals. Because of the severe consequences of irresponsible gun use and questionable business practices by some in the gun industry, we have concern that this legislation works against stronger, more sensible gun laws.

For more information, please visit www.justiceforgunvictims.org.

1990 Statement—PCUSA

The 202nd General Assembly (1990) of the Presbyterian Church (USA) supports gun control at federal, state and local levels as the most effective response to the present crisis of gun violence...

CALLS upon the United States government to establish meaningful and effective federal legislation to regulate the importation, manufacture, sale, and possession of guns and ammunition by the general public. Such legislation should include provisions for the registration and licensing of gun purchasers and owners, appropriate background investigations and waiting periods prior to gun purchase, and regulation of subsequent sale.

URGES the enactment of similar state and local laws, should such federal legislation be delayed.

CALLS upon government agencies at all levels to provide significant assistance to victims of gun violence and their families.

1998 Statement—PCUSA

The 210th General Assembly (1998) of the Presbyterian Church (USA):

Call[s] upon all Presbyterians to intentionally work toward removing handguns and assault weapons from our homes and our communities; and seek ways to develop community strategies and create sanctuaries of safety for our children...