



Senator Feinstein Urges Speaker Hastert to Schedule Vote on Assault Weapons Ban

-- *Comments Follow Speaker's Mistaken Comments on NPR* --

August 3, 2004

Washington, DC – Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) today corrected House Speaker Dennis Hastert's mistaken comments on the assault weapons ban and urged him to schedule a vote on renewing the ban before it expires on September 13.

In an interview broadcast today on National Public Radio, Speaker Hastert incorrectly asserted that "if we pass (the assault weapons ban) on the floor, there's no promise that we can get it out of the Senate because the Senate has defeated it already."

Senator Feinstein, in a letter to the Speaker, noted that on March 2, 2004 the Senate went on record in support of the assault weapons ban reauthorization when it approved the measure 52-47. The underlying bill was later killed following lobbying by the NRA.

The ban, originally sponsored by Senator Feinstein, is scheduled to expire September 13, which means there are only four legislative days to act. Otherwise a wide assortment of assault weapons, new high capacity ammunition magazines and flash suppressors will soon be for sale at local gun shops and gun shows throughout America.

On the attached page is a letter Senator Feinstein sent to Speaker Hastert:

August 4, 2004

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I was surprised to hear you on National Public Radio this morning state that although you thought the reauthorization of the Assault Weapons Ban "might have a chance on the floor" of the House, that the reason you were not bringing the Bill up is that "[t]here's no promise that we can get it out of the Senate because the Senate has defeated it already. So it can't become law unless it's going to be passed in the Senate."

As I am sure you are aware, when the Senate voted on the Feinstein-Warner-Schumer amendment to reauthorize the Assault Weapons Ban on March 2 of this year, it passed in the Senate by a vote of 52-47. Although the underlying bill was subsequently taken down, the record is clear: The Assault Weapons Ban was not defeated in the Senate. The Senate, in fact, is on the record voting in favor of its extension.

President Bush supports reauthorization because, as he stated in 1999, “[I]t makes no sense for assault weapons to be around our society.” On May 14, 2003, White House Press Secretary Ari Fleischer commented, “[T]he President supports the reauthorization of the current assault weapons ban... We’ll continue to work with the Congress, and they know the President’s position.” Given that the Senate has passed the Assault Weapons Ban reauthorization, I am confident that should the House take action, the Assault Weapons Ban reauthorization can be made law. We must keep these weapons out of the hands of gang members, narcotraffickers and terrorists.

I look forward to working with you on this matter, and to your leadership in helping the President and the Senate to pass into law the reauthorization of the Assault Weapons Ban.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

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