



April 26, 2001



Dear Mr. Bennett:

Thank you for contacting AARP regarding its position on federal gun control. Your comments have been referred to me for a reply.

For more than a decade, AARP has supported federal measures to control the availability of handguns because of their frequent use in the commission of violent crime. Handguns continue to present a serious threat to citizens of all ages. In 1993, over 13,000 people were killed with handguns. At least \$1 billion is spent annually on medical costs associated with the treatment of individuals who have been shot.

The prevalence of violence in some neighborhoods has resulted in many older persons becoming virtual prisoners in their homes. Increasingly, individuals living in the inner city are suffering the loss of children and grandchildren who are the victims of violent crimes and senseless shootings.

Further, the lack of restrictions on handgun sales in certain states enables gun runners to purchase guns that they can then resell in states with more restrictive laws. This lack of uniformity among the states significantly undermines their ability to control handgun availability.

Increased criminal activity involving automatic and semiautomatic weapons persuaded AARP in 1989 to expand its earlier gun control policy to include these weapons. This policy now reads as follows:

"The federal government must continue to control the availability of handguns and semiautomatic and automatic weapons because of their frequent use in the commission of violent crimes. The expiration date for the requirement

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for a five-day waiting period in the Brady Bill should be eliminated. The assault weapons ban should not be repealed."

AARP supported both the Brady bill, passed in November 1993, and the assault weapons ban, which was included in the 1994 crime bill. The Brady Bill institutes a waiting period of five business days for all handgun purchases, providing time to check the purchaser's background. The bill also raises licensing fees for gun dealers and requires that police be notified of any multiple gun purchases. However, the waiting period provision expires after five years, to be replaced with a nationwide "instant-check" system that will screen out felons through the use of computerized criminal records.

The ban on assault weapons outlaws for 10 years the manufacture and possession of 19 assault weapons, as well as copycat models and semiautomatic guns with two or more characteristics associated with assault weapons. The measure also bans ammunition-feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds. AARP would oppose any proposal to repeal the ban on assault weapons or weaken the Brady bill.

To assure that AARP policy is consistent with member views, the Association has polled its members on this issue. The results indicate that AARP members strongly support stricter gun control measures. A majority of those responding felt that, in general, the federal government should be "doing more" in the area of gun control.

When asked about specific options, our members gave the following responses:

- 82 percent strongly favored a federal law which controls the sale of guns, such as by making all persons register all gun purchases;
- 79 percent strongly favored a law requiring a license to carry any gun outside the home;
- 73 percent strongly favored a law requiring a two-week waiting period before buying a gun to permit time for a background check;
- 67 percent favored a law which would require a person to obtain a police permit before buying a gun (44 percent strongly favored this option).

Each of the first three options was opposed by no more than ten percent of those responding to the survey. In addition, the

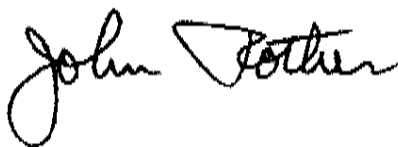
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survey results are comparable to other surveys of the population at large. In view of this level of support, AARP reaffirmed its policy on gun control.

Overall, AARP always tries to ensure that policy positions presented before the Congress, Executive Branch, and state legislatures express the views and priorities of a majority of our members. Our policy development process is designed to ensure that the views of our members are solicited and taken into account. For more information, a brochure entitled Setting a Policy Agenda: AARP and Its Members is enclosed.

Again, thank you for taking time to share your views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Rother". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

John Rother
Director
Legislation and Public Policy

Enclosure: Setting a Policy Agenda: AARP and Its Members