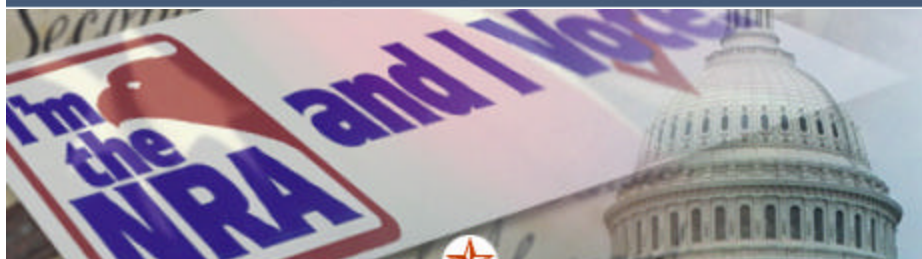




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News

Kerry Floor Statement on S. 1805 prior to his Votes to Ban Gun Shows and Reauthorize Clinton`s Gun Ban

Tuesday, July 27, 2004

The following statement was given by Senator John Kerry on March 2, 2004 shortly before voting to ban gun shows, reauthorize the Clinton gun ban on semi-automatic firearms, ban all center-fire rifle ammunition used by hunters and target shooters and voting to let anti-gun trial lawyers sue firearms manufacturers for the acts of criminals. It was John Kerry`s first Senate vote of the year and he and his new running left the campaign trail to come back to Washington, D.C. to cast their votes.

Floor Statement by John Kerry on S. 1805

Thank you. Mr. President, the issue before us today can really be summed up in one word—responsibility. I first started hunting with my cousins when I was a kid. And I still enjoy hunting today. And, I still believe strongly in the Second Amendment. I believe in the right to bear arms as it has been interpreted in our country. But, I also believe that with our rights come fundamental common-sense responsibilities.

The right to bear arms is a right that should be protected for law-abiding Americans who want to protect themselves and their families. There is, however, no right to place military-style assault weapons into the hands of terrorists and/or criminals, who wish to cause American families harm. There is no right to have access to have the weapons of war in the streets of America. And, for those who want to weald those weapons we have a place for them—it is the United States military, and we welcome them.

If we don`t act today to continue the ban on these deadly weapons, then our families in America, our police officers in America, are more threatened than they ought to be. For ten years, the assault weapons ban has stopped fugitives, and

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rapists, and murderers from purchasing weapons like AK-47's. And for ten years, for ten years, not one honest, responsible American has their guns taken away because of this law.

It's interesting that a few months ago I was actually hunting in Iowa. And I was hunting with a sheriff, and with some of his deputies. And as we walked through the field with dogs hunting pheasant, he pointed to a house in back of me, a house they had raided only a few weeks earlier, where, where meth and crack were being sold. And, right beside the bed in the morning when they went in to arrest this criminal—alleged criminal—there was an assault weapon on the floor lying there beside that individual. That sheriff and others across this country do not believe we should be selling these weapons or allowing them to be more easily available to criminals in our country.

That's why gun owners across America support renewing the assault weapons ban and they support also closing the gun show loophole, so that gun shows can continue uninterrupted without being magnets for criminals and/or terrorists who try to get around the law. If you have a gun show loophole, a terrorist can simply go to one state, go into the gun show, without the kind of background check normal in the process, leave that gun show, travel to another state and engage in either criminal or terrorist activity or both.

So, let's be honest about what we're facing here today, the opposition to this common-sense gun safety law is being driven by the powerful NRA special interest leadership and by lobbyists here in Washington. I don't believe this is the voice of responsible gun owners across America. Gun owners in America want to defend their families, and I believe that the NRA leadership is defending the indefensible.

There is a gap between America's field and stream gun owners and the NRA's soldier of fortune leaders. When he ran for President in 2000, President Bush promised the American people that he would work to renew the assault weapons ban. But now, under pressure, he is walking away from that commitment as he has with so many other promises, from education to the environment to the economy. This president says he will sign this give-away to the gun industry. But, he's refusing to sign the assault weapons ban that he told America he would support.

Mr. President, I believe that gun owners have responsibility and so does the President of the United States. A responsibility to keep his word. A responsibility to do what he says he will do, a responsibility to protect Americans from danger and to provide for the common defense. There is a reason that every major police and law enforcement group in America supports this ban. They know that no police officer should ever have to face the prospect of being outgunned by military style assault weapons. And no American citizen should have to live in fear of being gunned down by snipers, gang members or even terrorists who

wield assault weapons.

President Bush needs to tell America`s police officers why he is not standing on their side. Today George Bush will celebrate the anniversary of the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, and I am glad the President joined us in that effort. But, it will take more than a big new bureaucracy to make America safer.

Today airport screeners are being cut. Air marshals are not getting trained. Fire Departments only have enough radios for about 50% of the firefighters. And almost two-thirds of our firehouses are short changed. And the cops funds have been eliminated in order to fund president`s tax cuts for the wealthiest few.

By taking cops off our streets by the one hand and allowing military style assault weapons back on them with the other, this President is jeopardizing the safety of our communities, and it is wrong to do so, to pay for more tax breaks for the billionaires and payback more favors to a special interest lobbying group.

Let me just say one word quickly about the overall issue of liability itself. I`m not for and I don`t think any reasonable person is for a gun manufacturer being held liable for a murder that takes place in the life of America unfortunately too often. But what we do know is that 1.2% or so of gun dealers and wholesalers are responsible for about 57% of the weapons that wind up in the hands of criminals. And there are many straw transactions that take place in situations where manufacturers know who the problem dealers are.

To not have a wanton and reckless conduct standard for liability is to avoid responsibility and it is to allow people to look the other way, as they have in the past when we have demanded responsible actions in the communities of America.

I believe that American gun owners are right to act responsibly and live with common sense, and I`m proud to stand with those gun owners today. I hope that President Bush, the NRA leadership and other lobby groups will reverse course and join the millions of Americans who know that gun rights and gun responsibilities are mainstream American values.

And, that`s what we should vote for in the United States Senate.

Archive

John Kerry`s Anti-Gun Record

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