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For Immediate Release

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U.S. SENATE GRANTS SWEEPING LEGAL IMMUNITY TO GUN INDUSTRY

(San Francisco, CA) The U.S. Senate demonstrated its allegiance to the National Rifle Association today by passing legislation (S. 397) to provide unprecedented legal immunity to the gun industry. That bill prohibits, with certain narrow exceptions, civil actions and administrative proceedings against manufacturers and sellers of firearms and ammunition and requires the immediate dismissal of most lawsuits pending against the industry nationwide. Given the Bush Administration's strong support, passage of the House version (H.R. 800) should come easily.

Sue Ann Schiff, Executive Director of Legal Community Against Violence, expressed the organization's outrage over the Senate's action: "The Senate has slammed the courthouse door on victims of gun violence. Immunizing the gun industry from the consequences of its negligence is unwarranted and unfair. No other industry in the nation has received such special treatment."

Schiff noted that the immunity bill radically alters longstanding principles of tort law, which impose legal responsibility on individuals and businesses when their negligence results in harm to third parties.

"There is simply no reason to exempt the gun industry – of all industries – from the rules of our judicial system, when that industry produces a product that kills or injures nearly 100,000 people each year," stated Schiff.

"This legislation is particularly egregious in light of the fact that federal law already exempts guns and ammunition from the provisions of the Consumer Product Safety Act. Because of this exemption, the federal government has no authority to set safety standards for domestically manufactured guns. The immunity bill makes a bad situation worse by removing (except in the narrowest of circumstances) the only avenue left to those who are injured by defective guns," she said.

According to Schiff, "the Senate's passage of this blatant special interest legislation – which follows less than a year after the failure of Congress and President Bush to renew the federal assault weapon ban – demonstrates once again that our leaders in Washington are more interested in granting favors to the NRA than in protecting the health and safety of the American public."

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Legal Community Against Violence (LCAV) is a public interest law center dedicated to preventing gun violence. Formed in the wake of the 1993 assault weapon massacre at 101 California Street in San Francisco, LCAV provides free legal assistance to activists and public officials, including law enforcement and government attorneys, working to prevent gun violence. To learn more about our services or to request assistance, visit our website www.lcav.org, the nation's most comprehensive source for information on U.S. firearms regulation.