



Legal Community Against Violence

expertise, information & advocacy to end gun violence

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While Congress Does Nothing, Columbus Bans Assault Weapons

(San Francisco, CA) With yesterday's city council vote, the City of Columbus, Ohio joins states and local communities across the nation in banning assault weapons, and becomes the first major U.S. city to adopt a ban since the federal law expired last September.

Sue Ann Schiff, Executive Director of Legal Community Against Violence (LCAV), which provided legal expertise to the City of Columbus, stated: "We applaud the leadership of the Columbus city council in acting to ban these deadly weapons. Assault weapons are designed to kill humans quickly and efficiently. The Columbus ordinance is directed to military-style weapons designed for rapid spray firing, not to standard sporting firearms."

At the request of a Columbus city council committee, LCAV testified about assault weapons and provided its comprehensive report, *Banning Assault Weapons – A Legal Primer for State and Local Action*, which includes a model law. The report provides a legal framework for state and local officials interested in banning assault weapons. The Columbus city council used LCAV's model law as a starting point for its efforts. LCAV has a special interest in assault weapons: it was founded in 1993 following an attack in San Francisco in which a gunman with two assault weapons shot 14 people, killing nine.

As Schiff noted, "The need for strong state and local gun policies is more urgent than ever. Expiration of the federal ban demonstrates that we cannot rely solely on Congress and the President. It is crucial that state and local governments implement innovative laws and policies to fill in gaps in federal law and to serve as a catalyst for the nationwide policies we need."

"LCAV commends the Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence (OCAGV) for its assistance to the Columbus city council in support of the ban," Schiff added. OCAGV is a nonprofit statewide organization working to prevent gun death and injury in Ohio.

The federal assault weapon ban expired on September 13, 2004. Despite overwhelming public support for its renewal, Congress and the President allowed the 10-year old law to expire. As a result, semi-automatic, military-style weapons that were formerly banned under the federal law are now legal unless banned by state or local laws. Today, seven states as well as a number of local communities across the country have enacted laws banning assault weapons.

The reasons to ban assault weapons are evident: data from the FBI shows that, between 1998 and 2001, one out of every five law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty was killed by an assault weapon. In addition to criminals, terrorists have found assault weapons quite useful. An al-Qaeda training manual found in Afghanistan advises terrorists to purchase the weapons in the U.S., because it is so easy to do so.

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.

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Note to reporters and editors: Spokesperson from Ohio available on request.