



Legal Community Against Violence

expertise, information & advocacy to end gun violence

Date: September 13, 2004

For Release: September 14, 2004

Contact: Cori Stell, (415) 433-2062, (415) 948-3091 cell, cori@lcav.org

BATTLE FOR STRONG ASSAULT WEAPON BAN IS NOT OVER

-- San Francisco-based public interest law center urges state and local action to fill the void left by expiration of federal assault weapon ban --

(San Francisco, CA) The federal assault weapon ban expired September 13, 2004, thanks to the inaction of President Bush and the Republican leadership of Congress. The 1994 law, which included a 10-year sunset provision, was supported by every major law enforcement organization in the nation, as well as by Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan and Clinton. The law and its reauthorization were bitterly opposed by the National Rifle Association (NRA).

“We are deeply troubled that President Bush and Congress have bowed to the will of the NRA and chosen to ignore the will of the people,” said Sue Ann Schiff, Executive Director of Legal Community Against Violence (LCAV), a nonprofit law center formed in the wake of the 1993 assault weapon massacre at 101 California Street in San Francisco. “Renewal of the assault weapon ban was supported by an overwhelming majority of the American public, including gun owners,” she stated.

Schiff urged state and local governments to act to adopt their own assault weapon laws. “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 serve as a catalyst for the nationwide policies we need.”

Today LCAV reissued its report, *Banning Assault Weapons – A Legal Primer for State and Local Action*, as a legal roadmap for public officials and gun violence prevention activists working to ban assault weapons at the state and local level. “The model law contained in the report provides a starting point for these efforts,” Schiff said. “California’s law, the most comprehensive assault weapon ban in the country, was a key source for our model, but we also incorporated the best elements of other state and local assault weapon bans. As a result, LCAV’s model is stronger than any existing state or local ban, stronger even than bills introduced in the Senate and House to improve the now-expired federal ban.”

In addition to California, six other states – Connecticut, New Jersey, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts and New York – have assault weapon bans in place. At least 17 local communities across the nation also have adopted assault weapon bans.

“Existing laws must be vigorously enforced and many more jurisdictions must act to help keep these horrific weapons of war off our streets,” Schiff added.

Schiff observed that the gun industry has eagerly anticipated the expiration of the federal law. “Production of assault weapons is expected to increase and prices of the weapons are expected to drop as gun manufacturers flood the civilian marketplace,” she stated. “The need for strong state and local gun policies is more urgent than ever.”

Schiff noted that President Bush had repeatedly pledged support for reauthorization of the ban – stating during the last presidential campaign that “It makes no sense for assault weapons to be around our society” – yet failed to act in furtherance of that pledge. She stated that the Republican leadership in the House had

taken the position that it would only bring a bill to renew the assault weapon ban to a vote if instructed to do so by the President. The President, however, refused to act and the law was allowed to lapse.

###

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 web site, www.lcav.org, the nation's most comprehensive source for information on U.S. firearms regulation.