



July 23, 2001

## A Good Week for the Second Amendment

The right to keep and bear arms has scored several victories in the past year. Despite Democrats' best efforts, gun shows survived the 106<sup>th</sup> Congress. Gun owners played a crucial role in defeating Al Gore in states like West Virginia, Arkansas and Tennessee, any of which would have handed him the presidency. Attorney General John Ashcroft brought the U.S. government's position on the Second Amendment back in line with the Founders' intent. This past week added a few more victories to the tally.

### An Enemy Divided

On Monday, July 16, participants in the "Democratic National Conversation" criticized their party's hostility toward gun owners. **Senator Evan Bayh told fellow Democrats that when it came to gun owners and other groups, "We didn't get it when it comes to their concerns."** The *Washington Post* [reports](#) Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe stressed the importance of neutralizing issues such as gun rights. In one of two gubernatorial races this year, one Democrat attempted to do just that. **Virginia Democrat gubernatorial candidate Mark Warner made overtures to the National Rifle Association** to assure Virginia gun owners he would not push for additional gun control laws. Anti-self-defense advocates were roiled by the story, which played out over [several days](#) and showed support peeling away from their agenda.

### A Victory Against Gun Registration

The Clinton-Gore Administration began keeping files on gun purchases made by law-abiding citizens (first for 180 days, now 90 days) when the National Instant Check System went online in 1998. This amounted to a government registry of gun owners, expressly forbidden by federal law, and invited abuse by those within and outside the federal government. Attorney General Ashcroft recently announced the Bush-Cheney Administration would destroy such records after one business day as an interim step toward immediate destruction. **On Wednesday, July 18, the House soundly defeated (161-268) an amendment reinstating the Clinton-Gore policy of keeping files on law-abiding gun purchasers for 90 days.**

### A Victory Against U.N. Gun Control

Many governments saw the recent "U.N. Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light

Weapons in All Its Aspects” as an opportunity to restrict non-state ownership of firearms, including hunting rifles and handguns. The Bush-Cheney Administration [resisted](#) such efforts:

- **“The United States will not join consensus on a final document that contains measures contrary to our constitutional right to keep and bear arms,”** said the Administration, nor could the United States support language that “would preclude assistance to an oppressed non-state group defending itself from a genocidal government.”

Thanks to the Bush-Cheney Administration, language offensive to the Second Amendment was [defeated](#) on Saturday, July 21. (The U.N. has scheduled a follow-up conference for 2006.)

Also on this front, it is a small victory when any prominent news outlet accurately reports that the Second Amendment protects an *individual* right to keep and bear arms, as [the Associated Press](#) did in a Sunday, July 22, report on the U.N. small arms conference: **“The United States, whose Constitution guarantees an individual’s right to own guns**, made clear from the outset it would oppose any U.N. plan that even hinted at interference with that right.”

## **The Second Amendment Continues to Fight Crime**

Last but not least, this past week saw countless crimes deterred or stopped by law-abiding citizens. [Surveys by criminologists](#) suggest citizens use a gun to prevent a crime nearly 50,000 times per week, yet very few of these incidents make the news. Here are two stories that did.

On Friday, July 20, Diandre Lias, a man wanted for attempted murder and suspected of several armed robberies, reportedly walked into [The Tool House hardware store](#) in Shreveport, Louisiana, with a blue bandana over his face. He reportedly cocked a .38 caliber revolver and began to threaten store employees, one of whom drew a .357 caliber revolver. **Lias and the employee exchanged one shot each. Lias missed. The employee did not.** Wounded, Lias ran to a car that took him to Louisiana State University Hospital, where he died an hour later.

On Saturday, July 21, Gainesville, Florida, resident [Derek Messer](#) was doing his rounds as a newspaper carrier for the *Florida Times-Union* when five men approached Messer’s car. **The five men allegedly broke Messer’s windshield, struck his face, and were dragging him from the car when Messer, who holds a valid Florida concealed weapons permit, shot one of his attackers.** Police arrested and charged all five suspects and said Messer would not be charged. “If you have a concealed weapons permit, that’s what it’s for,” a police spokesman said. “In this case, it very easily saved Messer’s life.”

## **No More Fruitless HUD Gun Buybacks**

Today’s *Federal Register* contains a [notice](#) that **Department of Housing and Urban Development funds will no longer be available for programs that pay public housing residents to turn in their guns**. Anti-self-defense groups support such programs as a way to get guns out of private hands and stigmatize gun ownership. The Administration found gun buybacks are “ineffective in reducing

gun-related violent crimes” in public and assisted housing communities.

---

RPC staff contact: Michael F. Cannon, 4-2946

[Note: Online links are provided in the e-mail and online versions of this paper (at <http://rpc.senate.gov>).]