



**Violence Policy Center**

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September 27, 2004

The Honorable Henry Waxman  
House Government Reform Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Waxman:

The Violence Policy Center (VPC) is an organization dedicated to reducing firearms violence in America. The VPC strenuously opposes H.R. 3193, legislation that would repeal virtually all of the District of Columbia's firearms laws. This radical bill would endanger the safety of District residents, commuters, tourists, public officials, and the law enforcement professionals sworn to protect our nation's capital. The bill would make several extremely dangerous changes to current law.

**The Legislation Would Legalize Semiautomatic Assault Weapons and 50 Caliber Sniper Rifles**

H.R. 3193 would repeal the District law that currently prevents any person from possessing a semiautomatic assault weapon in Washington, D.C.. These firearms incorporate specific design characteristics intended to make them more lethal on the battlefield, including the ability to use high-capacity ammunition magazines ranging from 20 to 100 rounds. The widespread availability of assault weapons in the District would present a particular and proven hazard to law enforcement officials. The VPC analyzed FBI data that show that from 1998 through 2001, one out of five law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty were killed with an assault weapon. Earlier this year, three officers in Birmingham, Alabama, were killed in one incident by an assailant armed with an SKS assault rifle, a gun that sells for less than \$200 and that uses ammunition capable of piercing the body armor worn by police. The SKS is already the rifle most commonly encountered by police nationwide, according to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). H.R. 3193 would greatly increase the likelihood that members of the Metropolitan Police Department, U.S. Capitol Police, Secret Service, and other law enforcement entities operating in the District of Columbia would face suspects armed with SKSs and other assault weapons.

The bill would allow the virtually unrestricted possession of assault weapons, creating a security nightmare for law enforcement. The bill endorses the use of semiautomatic firearms—including assault weapons—for “self protection.” It places no limits on where assault weapons that are not readily concealable can be carried. This means that AK-47s and AR-15s could be carried on city streets or virtually any other place in the District that someone decides they need such a weapon for “self-protection.”

The legislation would certainly make it far more difficult to enforce routine security check points since nothing in the bill would prevent anyone from transporting readily available assault weapons in their vehicle within the District.

The bill would also legalize the sale of semiautomatic 50 caliber sniper rifles capable of firing multiple rounds of the largest caliber ammunition available without a special federal license. These guns are used by our troops in Iraq, valued for their ability to destroy parked aircraft, bring down helicopters, and pierce light armor—the type of armor used on armor-plated limousines. They are accurate up to a mile, roughly the distance from the West Front of the Capitol to the Smithsonian Metro Station.

H.R. 3193 would give its blessing to anyone who decided they wanted to take their loaded 50 caliber sniper rifle to the roof deck of their condominium or office building.

**The Bill Would Repeal the District’s Prohibition on Open and Concealed Carry of Concealable Weapons, Including Assault Pistols and Riot Shotguns**

H.R. 3193 would specifically allow any person to carry, openly or concealed, loaded handguns and other concealable weapons—such as assault rifles with folding stocks or riot shotguns equipped with pistol grips—in houses, places of business, and other land “possessed by that person.”

This provision would allow people armed with any type of handgun or assault pistol, or other similar concealable weapon, to carry those guns openly on their property. That would include business premises or the front lawns of houses mere feet away from public buildings such as the U.S. Supreme Court or Congressional office buildings.

At a time that security has become a top priority in the District—with buildings being fortified and security check points becoming routine—making military-style assault weapons and semiautomatic 50 caliber sniper rifles readily available is an obvious step in the wrong direction.

The Violence Policy Center urges all Representatives to oppose H.R. 3193.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Kristen Rand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "K".

M. Kristen Rand  
Legislative Director