



Catch Your Senators While You Can Easter Break gives you an opportunity

By Jeff Knox

(March 27, 2013) Your two US Senators are supposed to be at home working in their local offices this week and next before returning to Washington where one of their first agenda items will be a vote on S.649, the Democrat gun control package. As previously reported here, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has decided not to include Senator Dianne Feinstein's (D-CA) ban on semi-auto firearms and standard magazines in the base package, but instead will allow Feinstein to offer her gun and magazine bans as separate amendments. Reid says Feinstein will get two votes, one on adding her full bill, and one on just including the magazine ban. What is already included in the official bill is Senator Chuck Schumer's (D-NY) language criminalizing private firearm transfers that haven't gone through a government permission process, and a proposal from Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) that piles penalties on already-illegal straw sales and firearm transfers to prohibited persons, thus raising the stakes for dealers who fail to psychically detect lies on paperwork.

Reid's objective in his management of the legislation is to get the most restrictive gun control bill politically possible, while at the same time providing political cover to himself and colleagues from gun-friendly states who might face repercussions for casting anti-gun votes. He is hoping that senators can play both sides of the fence by voting down the Feinstein ban and voting for the other legislation. Reid hopes that anti-gun forces will reward senators who vote for the package and that GunVoters will forgive a vote in favor of the more "moderate" infringements on their rights, especially by those who voted against the more draconian proposals.

Meanwhile, gun rights activists are having none of it, demanding that senators reject all of the proposals. A trio of senators, Rand Paul (R-KY), Ted Cruz (R-TX), and Mike Lee (R-UT), have announced plans to lead a filibuster to keep the Democrats' entire gun control package from coming to the Senate floor. A filibuster would force a vote for "cloture" to cut off debate. That cloture vote is exactly what Democrats and Harry Reid want to avoid. First, Reid does not want the clear up-or-down vote that a cloture vote would represent. Moreover, it's unlikely Reid could muster the sixty votes to shut down the filibuster without support from the Republican side of the aisle. So, barring a seriously stupid move by senate Republicans (always a possibility), Reid will have a choice of either giving up on the whole idea or subjecting his minions to a clear pro-gun vs. anti-gun vote on whether to proceed.

Here's hoping that in this instance the Republicans don't live up to their moniker as the "stupid party" and provide Reid with an out. Here's also hoping that rumors of the National Rifle Association engaging in "quiet talks" with Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) on a "compromise" background check bill are just the products of some Washington wonk's wishful thinking. Although the NRA has a history of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory with unnecessary "compromises" (read concessions), for them to offer up a deal at this point would seriously jeopardize the organization's vaunted fundraising power. The activist grassroots who pay the bills, and whose activism both on issues and on campaigns does the heavy lifting of the rights movement, would close their checkbooks and find other places to send their money. Without the blessings of the core activists, both the NRA and the senators foolish enough to follow their lead would face serious reprisals.

The Senate recessed from March 25 through April 5 for a "State Work Period," their euphemism for their frequent vacations. During these periods they are supposed to be in their home states making themselves available to you, their employers. Take advantage of this opportunity. Call your senators' local offices and find out whether they're really in-state like they're supposed to be, and when and where you might get a chance to share with them what the Second Amendment means to you.

The current crop of anti-rights legislation is just more of the same old, ignorant, misguided pap that hoplophobic senators like Dianne Feinstein and Chuck Schumer have been trying to foist on the citizenry for decades. Not only are these bills unconstitutional and unworkable, nothing in the current package would have had the least impact on the heinous criminal activities that spawned this recent flurry of anti-rights activity -- the rash of mass-shooting tragedies in Connecticut, Colorado and elsewhere. Every one of the proposed measures would endanger gun owners, burden gun dealers and the federal background check infrastructure, while tying up scarce law enforcement resources. And of course none of these "do-something" measures would reduce criminal misuse of firearms or save lives.

Take advantage of your senators being at home and let them know that you oppose these bills and want them to do everything in their power to delay, derail, and defeat them. If you can't get actual face-time with your senators, be sure to leave messages with their staff -- unequivocal messages -- **No New Gun Control.**