Legislation establishing the Northern Border Coordinator in the Department of Homeland Security

Hon. Louise McIntosh Slaughter
Of New York
In the House of Representatives
Wednesday, April 27, 2005

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce legislation that would establish the position of Northern Border Coordinator in the Department of Homeland Security.

The northern border spans twelve states and over 3,000 miles. My congressional district, which includes Niagara Falls and Buffalo, serves as an annual gateway for 14.5 million individuals who enter the United States across the Niagara River bi-national bridges. The Peace Bridge, connecting Buffalo to Fort Erie, is the country’s busiest border crossing, with over 1.3 million trucks and 20 billion dollars of commerce passing over it each year. More broadly, Canada is our nation's single largest trading partner, with total trade activity exceeding $400 billion.

Mr. Speaker, in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks, there is a new awareness that the northern border can also serve as an opening for terrorists, weapons of mass destruction, and other hazardous materials. Even today, there are many areas along the northern border that lack sufficient personnel and resources to provide border security. Our nation must act to thwart terrorists who attempt to abuse the open relationship between our two countries. It is important that enhanced border security along the U.S.-Canadian border be overseen in a coordinated manner among federal, state and local law enforcement and first responders.

For this reason, I have introduced legislation that would establish the position of Northern Border Coordinator in the Department of Homeland Security. The Northern Border Coordinator would be responsible for increasing the security of the border between the U.S. and Canada; improving the coordination among the agencies responsible for homeland security; serving as the primary liaison with the state and local governments and law enforcement agencies in matters regarding border security; and serving as a liaison with the Canadian government.

It is critical that we devote the personnel and technology necessary to ensure our security while maintaining strong channels for trade. A position within the Department of Homeland Security dedicated towards these goals is a step in the right direction.

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must involve our allies and friends around the world.

One critical aspect of this War involves what I believe can best be labeled as “Strategic Communication.” Strategic Communication is not marketing; it is not simplistic slogans; it is not simply telling our way to the world how good we are. Strategic Communication is deeper and more sophisticated than perceived talk. Strategic Communication must involve our allies and friends around the world how good we are. Strategic Communication is a vital part of any effort to make the world a safer place.

But effective communication is also an essential part of any effort to make the world a safer place. As the Defense Science Board noted, “Strategic Communication is a vital component of U.S. national security. It is in crisis and must be transformed with a strength of purpose that matches our commitment to diplomacy, defense, intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security.” I believe that this proposal and the entire list of recommendations by the Defense Science Board can make a major contribution to this effort.

ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN

HON. PHIL GINGREY
OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 27, 2005

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, the so-called Assault Weapons ban passed in 1994 has now been expired for seven months and our nation has yet to feel the ill effects proponent of the ‘94 legislation predicted. The following article by Deborah Sontag of The New York Times, provides a great description of how little has changed since the ban was lifted. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert this article into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

[From the New York Times, Apr. 24, 2005]

MANY SAY END OF FIREARM BAN CHANGED LITTLE

(By Deborah Sontag)

Despite dire predictions that the streets would be awash in military-style guns, the expiration of the decade-long assault weapons ban last September has not set off a sustained surge in the weapons’ sales, gun makers and sellers say. It also has not caused as noticeable increase in gun crime in the past seven months, according to several metropolitan police departments.

References of the assault weapons ban did not surprise gun owners, nor did it surprise some advocates of gun control. Rather, it underscored what many of them had said all along: that the ban was porous—so porous that assault weapons remained widely available throughout their prohibition.

"It is remarkable that one time that the American public thought there was an assault weapons ban, there never really was one," said Kristen Rand, legislative director of the Violence Policy Center, a gun control group.

What’s more, law enforcement officials say that military-style weapons, which were never used in many gun crimes but did enjoy some vogue in the years before the ban took effect, seem to have gone out of style in criminal circles.

After the ban expired in September, DPMS/Panther Arms of Minnesota continued selling assault rifles to civilians by the tens of thousands. In compliance with the ban, the firearms manufacturer “sporterized” the military-style weapons, sawing off bayonet lugs, securing stocks so they were not collapsible and adding muzzle brakes. But the changes did not alter the guns’ essence; they were still semiautomatic rifles with pistol grips.

Gun control advocates say they don’t trust the self-reporting of gun industry representatives, who may want to play down the volume of their sales to ward off a revival of the ban.

"I never thought the sunset of the ban would be that big a deal," Mr. Luth said.

No production data are yet available for the seven months since the ban expired. And some gun-control advocates say they don’t trust the self-reporting of gun industry representatives, who may want to play down the volume of their sales to ward off a revival of the ban.

In my view, the assault weapons legislation was working,” said Diane Feinstein, Democrat of California, a chief sponsor of the new bill. “It was drying up supply and driving up prices. The number of the untraceable crimes dropped because they were less available.” Assault weapons account for a small fraction of gun crimes: about 2 percent, according to most studies, and more than 1 million of them had been traced in many high-profile shooting sprees. The snipers in the 2002 Washington-area shootings, for instance, used semiautomatic assault rifles that were copycat versions of banned carbines.

Gun crime has plummeted since the early 1990’s. But a study for the National Institute of Justice said that within a year "we credit the ban with any of the nation’s recent drops in gun violence." Research for the