

JULY 19, 2004

**SCHAKOWSKY WARNS -- TIME IS RUNNING OUT ON EXTENDING
ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN**

**JOINS 111 POLICE CHIEF/SHERIFFS FROM ILLINOIS
IN CALLING ON SPEAKER HASTERT & PRESIDENT BUSH TO PROTECT FAMILIES AND
LAW ENFORCEMENT
BY KEEPING LAW ON THE BOOKS**

CHICAGO, IL - Warning that Congress is almost out of time, U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today urged Speaker Hastert (R-IL) to immediately schedule a vote in the House to extend the assault weapons ban that is set to expire on September 13, 2004.

During a news conference in Chicago organized by Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, Schakowsky was joined by Algonquin Police Chief Russell Laine, who also serves as Vice President of the International Chiefs of Police Association, and Gurnee Police Chief Robert Jones and First Vice President of Illinois Association Chiefs of Police. They released a letter signed by 111 police chiefs and sheriffs from throughout Illinois calling on Speaker Hastert to take action before the law sunsets.

Below is the text of Schakowsky's written statement:

"President Bush and Speaker Hastert have taken dead aim at the Assault weapons ban. We are only nine legislative days away from allowing deadly, fully automatic weapons back onto our streets because President Bush and Speaker Hastert refuse to extend the assault weapons ban.

"If you are a criminal, you can mark September 13, 2004 on your day planner. That's the day that the assault weapons ban expires and, on that day, you can get your hands on an AK-47, legally. And don't forget to send a thank you note to Speaker Hastert and President Bush when you go pick up your new, fully-automatic assault weapon.

"Time is running short. We only have nine legislative days left to renew the assault weapons ban that has been in place for the last ten years. The Republican leadership refuses to take any action in the House of Representatives to renew the ban.

"Law enforcement officers across the country are demanding action because they are the ones in the line of fire. They are the ones who must face these deadly weapons. They understand that Speaker Hastert and President Bush are on the wrong side of the law when it comes to the assault weapons ban."

"Fourteen months ago, in May 2003, my Democratic colleagues from Illinois joined me in sending letters to Speaker Hastert and President Bush urging them to take leadership in renewing the ban and to schedule it for a vote in the House of Representatives. Well, it's been 14 months and there's been no action.

"We have the time in the House to schedule a vote on renewing the ban, but instead, we've been wasting the time in the past few months to re-vote on many bills that we had already passed or to name post office after post office.

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"President Bush himself has pledged his support for the renewal of the ban - but has done absolutely nothing to see that it happens. I guess President Bush was firing off blanks when he said he'd sign an extension of the ban. The Senate passed an amendment in March that would have renewed the assault weapons ban - it passed by a bipartisan vote of 52 - 47. Former Presidents Ford, Carter, and Clinton sent a letter to President Bush urging him to work hard in support of renewing the ban.

"Speaker Hastert and President Bush are ignoring the will of the American people. Polls show that there is overwhelming support for the ban. A recent poll of likely voters revealed that 79% said they supported renewing the assault weapons ban. Furthermore, voters recognize that the assault weapons ban does not infringe on hunters' rights - 72% of those polled said that assault weapons are completely different from other types of guns and a different issue entirely from other gun safety measures.

"Now it's time to demand that Speaker Hastert make time in the next nine legislative days for the House to vote on the assault weapons ban. If we allow this ban to expire, then every day after that more police officers and innocent families will be in the sights of criminals wielding Uzis and Tec-9s and AK-47s - guns that have no purpose other than to kill people.

"Every day that we allow to pass without an assault weapons ban is a day that the President and the Republican leadership in this country are disregarding the safety of the American people. So I say to Speaker Hastert, we've been waiting for too long - it's time to renew the assault weapons ban, now!"