

Gun control

House bill would revise federal law of 1968

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The House Judiciary Committee on Tuesday sent to the House floor a compromise gun control bill that the gun owners' lobby argues would fall far short of easing burdensome provisions in the historic safe streets law of 1968.

The committee bill, approved 35-0, would be the first major revision to the nation's 18-year-old federal gun control law. House Majority Leader Jim Wright, D-Texas, said it could be scheduled for a vote as early as next week.

The measure includes a provision for interstate sales of rifles and shotguns — but not handguns — and a records check, but no waiting period, for firearms customers.

The National Rifle Association, calling the bill too restrictive for law-abiding gun owners and sportsmen, vowed to continue backing a rival Senate-passed bill which would significantly weaken the 1968 law.

Representatives of law enforcement and handgun control groups said they could support the House Judiciary bill, although they said they prefer a waiting period before a customer could pick up the gun he had purchased. Both sides said they'll lobby heavily in the next several days, when the committee bill will be in a virtual race with a discharge petition that would send the rival McClure-Volkmer Senate bill to the floor.

The petition needs 218 signatures, half the members in the House, and reportedly needs about 10 to reach that goal.

Both Republican and Democratic supporters of the House bill said it would balance the needs of police officers, who want to make it more difficult for criminals to obtain weapons, and sportsmen and gun dealers who seek to rid the current law of what they view as unduly burdensome restrictions.

The major provision of the committee measure would allow sales of rifles and shotguns from a dealer in one state to a customer from another state, providing that state and local gun laws from both areas are followed. Interstate handgun sales would be banned, as they are under current law.

As a substitute for a waiting period, the measure would require that when a sale is made, the information filled out by the customer would be given to law enforcement authorities for a records check. However, the customer could immediately walk out of the store with the gun.

Gun control advocate Sarah Brady, wife of presidential press secretary James Brady, called the bill a "good compromise." Her husband was shot, along with President Reagan, in a 1981 assassination attempt by John W. Hinckley Jr.

History today

Today is Wednesday, March 12.

On this date:

In 1664, New Jersey became a British colony as King Charles II granted land in the New World to his brother James, the Duke of York.

In 1912, Juliette Gordon Low founded an organization in Savannah, Ga., called the Girl Guides, which later became the Girl Scouts.

In 1925, Chinese revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen died.

In 1930, Mohandas K. Gandhi began a 200-mile march to protest a British tax on salt.

In 1932, Ivar Kreuger, the "Swedish Match King," committed suicide in Paris, leaving behind a financial empire that turned out to be worthless.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt broadcast the first of his so-called fireside chats on radio, telling Americans what was being done to deal with the nation's economic crisis.

In 1940, Finland surrendered to the Soviet Union during World War II.

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman established what became known as the Truman Doctrine to help Greece and Turkey resist communism.

In 1969, Beatle Paul McCartney married Linda Eastman in London.

In 1980, a jury in Chicago found John Wayne Gacy guilty of the murders of 33 men and boys.

In 1985, the United States and the Soviet Union opened new arms control talks in Geneva with a get-acquainted session. Meanwhile, Vice President Bush arrived in Moscow for the funeral of the late Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko.

Police shoot, kill two teens, wound 81 in South Africa

Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Police said they shot dead two teen-agers and wounded 81 other blacks Tuesday in scattering a crowd of about 2,000 outside a courthouse near South Africa's eastern border.

They said the blacks wielded sticks and ignored warnings to disperse, but the Star newspaper of Johannesburg said riot squads fired after the crowd agreed to leave.

The shooting occurred in Kabokweni, a black township near the Mozambique border, where thousands had gathered for the trial of eight blacks on riot charges, a police statement said.

The statement said that after the crowd refused to leave, police fired tear smoke and then birdshot, killing a 15-year-old boy and wounding 80 people. In two other cases, birdshot killed a 14-year-old boy and wounded a 17-year-old, it added.

On a day that saw authorities in a conciliatory mood on some issues related to the country's anti-apartheid unrest and unyielding on others, the government:

- Lifted expulsion orders against three CBS journalists accused of violating a police ban on filming a black funeral;

- Imposed tough restrictions on two leading anti-apartheid campaigners despite a chorus of disapproval from both white and black communities;

- Permitted the Rev. Allen Boesak, an anti-apartheid activist facing subversion charges, to travel to Swe-

den for the funeral of assassinated Prime Minister Olof Palme;

- Announced the arrest of Marion Sparg, 27, a white South African journalist who espoused the cause of the African National Congress guerrilla movement, on suspicion of planting bombs in South African police stations. Two officers and two passersby were wounded in blasts at two police stations last week.

The government served five-year "banning" orders on Henry Fazzie and Mkhusele Jack, leading campaigners in the eastern Cape province against the system of racial segregation through which 5 million whites govern 24 million blacks. Banning means the two must stay home from dusk to dawn and may not attend political meetings or disseminate campaign literature.

The two men, prominent in the multiracial United Democratic Front, were banned as "a threat to law and order," the government said. But the action provoked anger and astonishment in Port Elizabeth, their south coast home city.

Fazzie and Jack had played influential roles in suspending black consumer boycotts that were crippling white business in Port Elizabeth.

The United Democratic Front, South Africa's largest anti-apartheid group, said the banning proved that lifting the seven-month state of emergency Friday was "merely an attempt to placate international opinion."

Jewish man lynched in 1915 pardoned

ATLANTA — The Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles on Tuesday granted a posthumous pardon to Leo Frank, a Jewish businessman accused of murder whose lynching in 1915 was a catalyst for the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan.

The board, which had denied Frank a pardon in December 1983, issued a one-page decision which did not address his guilt or innocence in

the 1913 slaying of Mary Phagan, of which he was convicted.

The ruling said the action was taken "in recognition of the state's failure to protect the person of Leo Frank and thereby preserve his opportunity for continued legal appeal of his conviction, and in recognition of the state's failure to bring his killer to justice, and as an effort to heal old wounds."

Frank, a pencil merchant, was convicted and sentenced to death for the murder of Phagan, who worked in Frank's downtown Atlanta pencil factory.

Frank was lynched in 1915 after then-Gov. John Slaton commuted his sentence to life in prison. The lynching has been cited as the worst single incident of anti-Semitic violence in the United States.

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