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Crime Bill Passed, But Johnson Calls Gun Curbs Weak

Congress

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

The House gave final Congressional approval yesterday to "law and order" legislation including a half measure of gun controls and a stiff blast at the Supreme Court.

The controversial anti-crime package was sent to the White House by a roll call vote of 368 to 17.

President Johnson responded by calling the gun controls far too weak. His message was read on the floor of the House almost immediately after the roll call was over. It was greeted in silence.

The President said nothing of the other provisions in the bill. The measure bears little resemblance to the original "safe streets" proposal he had sent to Capitol Hill last year.

Overhauled in the Senate last month and passed without changes yesterday by the House, the measure also provides sweeping eavesdropping authority, calls for firing of D.C. and Federal employees convicted of rioting, authorizes Federal law enforcement funds for the States, and increases the pre-arraignment detention period here to six hours.

Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's assassination provided the impetus for passage by heightening the demand for anti-crime action and measures to assure public order, but it was an ironic tribute in several respects.

The liberal New York Senator had announced his opposition to the slaps at the Supreme Court, the provisions authorizing wiretapping and eavesdropping and the bill's failure to include controls for rifles and shotguns.

Final passage came after a futile attempt by House libe-

erals—joined by several anti-gun-control Congressmen—to open the bill to amendment. That move was voted down 349 to 40.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Emanuel Celler (D-N.Y.) said he would introduce legislation next week in hopes of extending the gun controls to rifles and shotguns and of
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blunting the new police procedures sanctioned yesterday.

The bill sent to the White House outlaws interstate mail-order sales of handguns and limits over-the-counter sales within a State to residents over 21. They were the first restrictions to be passed over the powerful National Rifle Association's opposition in years.

Recognizing the inevitable, the gun lobby withdrew its opposition at the last minute. Rep. Bob Sikes (D-Fla.) told the House that the NRA was still unhappy with the bill, but recognized the need to curb crime and would thus "interpose" no objections.

The provisions aimed at the Supreme Court would overturn key rulings restricting the admissibility of confessions and eyewitness testimony in Federal courts.

Celler charged that the new rules would "threaten the constitutional rights of our citizens."

Other speakers captured the mood of the House.

Rep. Paul Rogers (D-Fla.) called the bill a crucial first step "to unleash the hands of police and prosecutors."

"This will serve as a signal notice that this Congress means business," Rep. James H. Quillen (R-Tenn.) added with a shout. "The Supreme Court must be curbed."

Sentiment for the bill had been growing in the House, even before Kennedy's murder, in reaction to rising crime rates and riots from the ghettos to the campuses.

Only a few protests were voiced besides Celler's. Among them was House Rules Committee Chairman William Colmer (D-Miss.) who scolded the House for rushing through the measure just as it had the civil rights bill in the wake of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination.

Colmer said he doubted that more than a handful of House members had even read the Senate-approved measure.

"God knows we need an anti-crime bill," Colmer said, "but this isn't the way to legislate. . . What kind of House are we? What kind of

statesmen are we? Are we going to surrender completely to the other body?"

Gun Control Support High, Poll Shows

PHILADELPHIA, June 5 (AP)—A nationwide telephone survey conducted within hours after Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was shot Wednesday showed about four of five adults want strong gun control laws, both Federally and locally.

Only two weeks ago, the same survey indicated that while a Federal mail order gun control law was favored by 79.6 per cent, only about 40 per cent favored local gun registration and only 25 per cent wanted gun ownership controlled by local police permits.

"Obviously, the attempt on Kennedy's life has had a tremendous effect on public opinion," said Albert E. Sindlinger, president of the survey firm, Sindlinger & Co. Inc.

The survey of 1200 persons picked at random indicated 81.7 per cent favored gun registration with local police while 73.4 per cent called for local police permits for guns.



Associated Press

A friend comforts Sen. Kennedy's press secretary, Frank Mankiewicz, left, after he told reporters of the Senator's death early yesterday morning in Los Angeles.

President

By Carroll Kilpatrick
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Johnson appealed to Congress again yesterday for tougher gun control legislation, declaring that the bill the House passed late in the day was a "half-way measure."

The bill contained only a "watered-down version" of the gun control law he proposed, the President said. It limits the sale of pistols but not of rifles.

He did not indicate whether he would sign or veto the omnibus crime control measure, which contains the limited gun control provision.

The President also called on the Governors of the 50 states to review their gun laws and to strengthen them where necessary.

"Today the Nation cries out to the conscience of the Congress," Mr. Johnson said in a letter to the Speaker and the President of the Senate.

"Criminal violence from the muzzle of a gun has once again brought heartbreak to America," he said in reference to the murder of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

The time has surely come, he wrote, for "a strong and effective gun control law, governing the full range of lethal weapons."

The President's letter was sent to the Capitol just as the House was completing action on the omnibus crime bill and sending it to the White House.

After sending his letter, the President read it before television cameras.

Special Assistant Joseph A. Califano said that he had "never seen the President more disturbed about the failure of Congress to act than on this gun legislation."

The President worked on the letter until nearly 2 a.m., Califano said.

As a supplement to the restricting of sales of pistols, the President asked Congress to bar the sale of rifles and shot-

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detention period here.*

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*Key provisions of crime
bill.*

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President Seeks Tougher Gun Law

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guns by mail order; to prohibit the sale of rifles and shotguns to persons under 18 years of age; and to make it unlawful to sell any rifle or shotgun in one state to a resident of another.

The President said that every year guns are involved in 6500 murders in the United States as compared with 30 in England, 99 in Canada, 68 in West Germany and 37 in Japan.

"I have told the Nation of the brutal loopholes in our laws," the President said. "Two million guns were sold in the United States last year."

Too many of those guns were bought, he said, by the demented, deranged, hardened criminals, dope addicts and alcoholics.

"We cannot expect these irresponsible people to be pru-

dent in their protection of us, but we can expect the Congress to protect us from them," he said.