

# GUN CONTROL BILL PASSED IN SENATE

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Interstate Sales of Shotguns,  
Rifles and Ammunition Is  
Curbed—Vote Is 71-17

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 18

— The Senate passed today a gun control bill restricting interstate sales of rifles, shotguns and ammunition.

The legislation, proposed by the Administration after the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, was approved by an overwhelming vote of 70 to 17 as even long-time opponents of gun controls joined in supporting the limited measure.

But when it came to stricter controls, the opponents were in firm command. The Senate rejected several attempts to strengthen the Administration bill by requiring registration of firearms or licensing of gun-owners.

The legislation now goes to a Senate-House conference, with Congressional leaders determined to obtain final action before Congress adjourns next month. Basically, the Senate voided one major House provision that would have exempted most types of ammunition from controls.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts made his first appearance on the Senate floor

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since the assassination of his brother Robert in June to cast his votes for registration and licensing.

But throughout the five days of Senate debate on the legislation, it was increasingly apparent that the popular pressure for strong gun controls that existed immediately after the Kennedy assassination had been replaced by opposition built up among Western and Southern Senators by various gun and sporting groups.

Senator Kennedy remained silent in his back-row seat, his chin in his hand, as the licensing and registration controls that he and his brother had advocated went down to repeated defeats at the hands of a coalition of Western and Southern Senators.

He had considered making a speech in favor of stricter controls but, according to aides, had finally decided that such an intervention would not be in good taste.

The legislation is designed to help states enforce their own gunlaws by limiting the interstate traffic in firearms and ammunition. The bill:

¶ Prohibits interstate mail order sales of rifles and shotguns. A similar ban on the sale of revolvers and pistols was contained in the crime control law passed last spring.

¶ Prohibits over-the-counter sales of firearms to out-of-state residents. Both the Senate and House bills, however, contain a provision permitting adjoining states to exempt themselves from this prohibition.

¶ Prohibits sales of guns and ammunition to juveniles—sons under 21 in the case of handguns and under 18 in the case of rifles and shotguns.

¶ Bans mail-order sales of ammunition and prohibits over-the-counter sales to juveniles, convicted felons and persons ineligible to purchase ammunition under state and local law. Under the House bill, ammunition for rifles and shotguns as well as .22-caliber ammunition would be exempted from the controls.

### Purpose of the Law

The intended purpose of the legislation is to make it mandatory for a person to acquire a firearm from a licensed gun dealer in his own state, thus preventing a person from circumventing state gun laws by ordering a gun through the mails or purchasing a gun out of state.

In both the Senate and House bills, however, new and looser definitions were established for gun dealer and collectors licenses. As a result, the Justice Department is fearful that persons who are not genuine dealers or collectors will be able to circumvent the controls in the new legislation by obtaining licenses.

For the first four days of debate, gun control proponents fought to tighten loose provisions and succeeded only in the one dealing with ammunition.

With that, the battle turned to registration and licensing controls, which the Administration had requested after first

proposing the restrictions on interstate sales, but which the White House did not fight for too strenuously in either the House or Senate.

While reluctantly prepared to accept limitations on interstate sales, gun control opponents drew the line at licensing and registration controls. From the reaction built up back home, it was also apparent that such controls were politically difficult for Southern and Western senators to accept.

The Senate Democratic leader,

Mike Mansfield of Montana, alluded to this political fact in a last-minute appeal to Senators to put aside regional considerations and accept licensing and registration controls as a necessary step to control crime and violence in the urban areas.

"We should remember we all wear two hats," he told his colleagues, "one as a Senator from our state and the other as a Senator of the United States."

"Those of us who come from the rural West have an obligation to the rest of the country to help cut down on crime," he said. His appeal fell on deaf ears for only a handful of Western Senators supported registration and licensing.

Senator Kennedy unobtrusively entered the chamber just as Senator Mansfield was finishing his appeal and as Sena-

tor Roman L. Hruska, Republican of Nebraska, the leader of the gun control opponents, was repeating his arguments against registration and licensing.

Throughout the debate, gun control advocates sought to depict registration and licensing as anticrime measures, with registration assisting in the solution of crimes and licensing helping to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, juveniles and drug addicts.

To this argument, Senator Hruska repeatedly countered that there was no demonstrated connection between crime and availability of guns, that registration and licensing would be extremely costly, lead to a Federal police system and confiscation of guns.

By a 55-31 vote, the Senate rejected a proposal to require registration of all firearms and licensing of all gun owners.

Under the proposal offered by Senator Joseph D. Tydings, Democrat of Maryland, primary responsibility for the controls would have been placed on the states, with the Federal Government moving in only if the states failed to act.

With the Tydings amendment defeated, the gun control forces were routed on a series of "fallback" amendments.

By a 47-35 vote, the Senate rejected a proposal by Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, to cut off shipment of firearms into any state which by 1971 had not enacted controls providing for registration of firearms and screening of gun owners.

An amendment by Senator Edward W. Brooke, Republican of Massachusetts, to establish a national inventory of firearms—an indirect form of registration—was defeated 53-31.