

SENATE UNIT VOTES FOR BAN ON SALES OF RIFLES BY MAIL

Republicans' Switch Spurs Hope for the Passage of the Administration Bill

JOHNSON PRAISES MOVE

In Statement He Asks That Plan Be Sent to the Floor for Immediate Action

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WASHINGTON, June 18 — The Administration's gun control bill picked up decisive support in the Senate today as a Judiciary subcommittee unanimously approved a proposal to ban mail order sales of rifles and shotguns.

With leading Republicans switching their position to support the Administration, there no longer was any question that the Senate would approve the gun control bill proposed by President Johnson following the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

The only question remaining was whether the Senate would vote even stronger controls than those proposed by the Administration by approving registration of all firearms and licensing of all gunowners.

Johnson's Position

President Johnson made clear that at least for the moment the Administration was content to lay registration and licensing controls aside for the sake of pushing its mail order controls through Congress quickly.

Meanwhile, Attorney General Ramsey Clark announced that backers of tougher gun controls had organized a committee to try to increase public pressure for such legislation.

Mr. Johnson, who flew back to the White House today from a long weekend at his Texas ranch, promptly hailed the endorsement of the Administration's bill by the Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Johnson Issues Statement

In a statement issued from his plane, Air Force I, through the White House, he urged the full Judiciary Committee "promptly to approve the action of its subcommittee and send the bill to the Senate floor for immediate consideration."

"Americans should not have to wait any longer for a strict gun control law," Mr. Johnson

Continued on Page 29, Column 2

SENATE UNIT ASKS GUN-SALE CURBS

Continued From Page 1, Col. 1

said. "The time for action is now. We must give our people the protection they deserve from lethal rifles and shotguns as soon as possible."

The unexpectedly one-sided subcommittee vote reflected the large shift in Senate opinion on gun controls since Mr. Kennedy's assassination and the ensuing public demands for stronger gun controls.

Only a month ago the Senate, by a 53 to 29 vote, defeated the Administration's proposal for regulation of mail order sales of rifles and shotguns. Today five Senators on the subcommittee who voted against the Administration then voted for an even stronger Administration bill controlling the interstate sales of long guns and ammunition.

Among those switching in what he described as a "modification" of his past position was Senator Roman L. Hruska, Republican of Nebraska, who until now has led the fight in the committee and on the Senate floor against stronger gun controls.

Senator Hruska, who fought against the Administration's bill in the closed-door subcommittee meeting, said in a statement afterward: "If the majority of the Senate feels it is necessary to pass gun control legislation such as the President suggested, I will not object. Indeed, I will support it."

The Senate Republican leader, Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois, who only a week ago said that he saw no need for additional gun laws, told reporters today after a Republican Policy Committee luncheon that he would not "resist" the Administration's bill "if there is a demand for it."

Since the death of Senator Kennedy 12 days ago, Senators and House members have received a deluge of mail on gun controls such as has not been received on any other issue in recent years. But the mail, once preponderantly in favor of stricter controls, is beginning to shift as the National Rifle Association and

other gun groups stimulate mail in opposition.

The mail being received by Senator Joseph D. Tydings, Democrat of Maryland, which had been running 20 to 1 in favor of stricter controls, was down to 10 to 1 today. The Senate majority leader, Mike Mansfield, reported that his mail from Montana, initially in favor of stricter controls, had shifted to 2 to 1 against controls.

The Next Step

The battle scene now shifts to the full Senate Judiciary Committee, which earlier this year rejected the proposed ban on mail order sales of rifles and shotguns by a 10-to-6 vote. On the basis of the shifts in the subcommittee today, it was apparent that there were now enough votes in the full committee to clear the Administration's bill.

In addition to Mr. Hruska, those Senators shifting were Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana; Quentin N. Burdick, Democrat of North Dakota; Philip A. Hart, Democrat of Michigan, and Strom Thurmond, Republican of South Carolina.

What Bill Provides

The Administration's bill would prohibit interstate mail order sales of rifles and shotguns except to licensed gun dealers, ban over-the-counter sales of such guns to out-of-state residents and prohibit sales of long guns to persons under 18 years old.

In addition, the bill would prohibit interstate mail order sales of ammunition except to licensed dealers and prohibit the sale of hand gun ammunition to persons under 21 and of long gun ammunition to persons under 18.

The subcommittee amended the Administration's bill to include a provision banning the sale of "destructive devices," such as bazookas, hand grenades, machine guns and sawed off shotguns.