

# House Unit Votes Gun Bill, But Senate Panel Delays It

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WASHINGTON, June 20—The Administration's gun control bill was approved today by the House Judiciary Committee but ran into a potentially troublesome delay in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

By a 29-to-6 vote, the House committee approved a slightly amended version of the Administration bill, which would prohibit interstate mail order sales of rifles and shotguns and regulate the sale of ammunition.

The action by the House committee, which until now has refused to consider gun control legislation, seemed to clear the way for House approval of the Administration bill.

Representative Emanuel Celler, Democrat of Brooklyn and

sponsor of the Administration measure, predicted that the bill would be approved "with no trouble at all" by the House.

Some trouble and delay may be encountered, however, in the House Rules Committee. Representative William M. Colmer, Democrat of Mississippi, who is chairman of the Rules Committee, said he was "not enthusiastic about legislation in a period of emotion and hysteria."

From the Administration's standpoint, a much more serious delay was encountered in the Senate Judiciary Committee, which decided to put off any action until next Thursday. The postponement was ordered after it appeared doubtful that there were enough committee

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votes present to pass the Administration bill.

Three supporters of the Administration bill—Senator Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana, Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, and Edward V. Long, Democrat of Missouri—were absent. Senator Roman L. Hruska, Republican of Nebraska, a past opponent of gun control legislation, blocked a move to let the absent Senators cast their votes by proxy.

In a statement applauding the House committee's action, President Johnson urged Senate and House floor leaders to schedule floor action on the Administration bill before the July 4 recess, which begins on July 3.

With the delay in the Senate Judiciary Committee, and possibly a delay in the House Rules Committee, it seemed increasingly unlikely that this schedule could be met by Congress.

Seeking to keep pressure on Congress for action, President Johnson also produced "tragic new evidence" of the need for stricter gun controls.

### Cites Fresh Statistics

The President cited new statistics from the Federal Bureau of Investigation showing that murders with guns had increased from 6,500 to 7,700 in 1967, while aggravated assaults with guns rose from 43,000 to 55,000 and robberies with guns from 60,000 to more than 71,000.

The White House also made public a letter from President Johnson to the Governors of the 50 states asking their cooperation in implementing the new crime control legislation and in enacting "stringent" gun controls at the state level.

The crime law, signed late yesterday by the President, provides Federal assistance to states and local communities in improving their law enforcement agencies.

"We have achieved the breakthrough," the President told the Governors. "Now you must act to follow through."

The crime control law also contains a provision prohibiting interstate mail order sales of handguns. The President asked the support of the Governors in getting Congress to extend the prohibition to include rifles and shotguns.

The delay in the Senate committee introduced a new complication in the Administration's drive to push its gun control bill through Congress as quickly as possible.

As reflected in the President's statement, it is the Administration's belief that Congress must act before the four-day July 4 recess if there is to be any assurance that its bill will be approved. If action is delayed until after the recess the Administration fears that a reaction against gun control legislation will take over in Congress.

There are some indications that this anticontrol reaction, stirred up by the National Rifle Association and other gun groups, is already beginning to take hold.

The office of Senator James O. Eastland, Democrat of Mississippi and chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, reported that the Senator was being deluged with mail and telegrams opposed to gun control legislation.

Since Tuesday, the Senator has received more than 3,000 letters and 16,391 telegrams, with about 75 per cent of the letters and 90 per cent of the telegrams opposed to the Administration bill. Many of the telegrams used substantially the same wording, reflecting a concerted lobbying effort against the Administration bill.

The delay was also encouraging Senate proponents of stricter gun controls than those

proposed by the Administration, such as registration of all firearms and licensing of gun-owners.

A Senate Judiciary subcommittee will open hearings on Wednesday on proposed registration and licensing controls, with Attorney General Ramsey Clark the first witness.

With at least a few days of hearings, Senator Joseph D. Tydings, Democrat of Maryland, observed today, he will be in "a better position" to offer his registration and licensing controls as an amendment to the Administration bill, which he contends would be ineffective.

According to Senate sources, Mr. Clark has privately made known his personal support for

licensing and registration controls as well as a prohibition against ownership of handguns. But in public testimony, Mr. Clark is expected to echo the White House position that Congress should first pass the Administration bill and then consider other controls.

The Administration's position is that introduction of the controversial registration and licensing issues would only jeopardize chances of action on its bill.

In this position, the Administration is forming a strange coalition with former opponents of gun controls, who are willing to accept the Administration bill if that is the price they must pay to ward off registration and licensing controls.