

# CELLER ABANDONS GUN REGISTRATION TO WIN CONTROLS

Action Is Expected to Bring Rules Committee Backing for Ban on Mail Sales

PLEDGE IS GIVEN PANEL

Brooklyn Democrat Says He Will Oppose Licensing for Rest of This Session

By FRED P. GRAHAM  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 8 — Representative Emanuel Celler pledged today to oppose gun registration legislation for the remainder of this Congress in order to obtain speedy House action on a bill to ban mail order sales of all guns.

This shift by the Brooklyn Democrat, who is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, appeared to reduce almost to zero the prospects for a gun registration law this year.

However, his promise was expected to clear the way for approval by the House Rules Committee of a companion Administration-backed gun control bill that would ban mail order sales of rifles, shotguns and ammunition. Mail order sale of hand guns is already prohibited.

Mr. Celler told the Rules Committee that he still favored legislation to register guns and to license gun owners but that he was willing to sacrifice the measure for this session to get floor action on the ban on mail order sales.

### Would Fight Senate Action

"I state here that I will oppose any amendment offered on the floor for registration and licensing and I will oppose any Senate amendment for registration and licensing in a [House-Senate] conference," Mr. Celler said.

Since he would be the ranking House member on any House-Senate conference committee on firearms laws, Mr. Celler would be in a strong position to carry out his pledge.

It came as gun control opponents in both houses used stalling tactics to slow consideration of both proposals. Supporters of gun controls began to say privately that half a loaf this late in the session would be better than none.

Congressional leaders are pressing for adjournment before the Aug. 5 opening of the Republican National Convention, and many Congressmen appear ready to settle for a bill that would supplement the recently passed ban on mail order sales of hand guns by adding the prohibition against mail order sales of long guns and ammunition.

Representative William M. McCulloch of Ohio, House manager of this bill on the Republican side, also told the Rules Committee that he opposed tying the gun registration measure to it, because he feared that it would endanger the prospects of the mail order ban.

The Rules Committee hearing was interrupted repeatedly throughout the day by quorum

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calls on the House floor, which prompted grumbling from some members that gun law opponents were using dilatory tactics. The Rules Committee did not reach a vote today but scheduled another session for tomorrow morning.

On the Senate side two Republican Senators, Roman L. Hruska of Nebraska and Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, questioned Attorney General Ramsey Clark and other witnesses for two hours and called Mr. Clark back tomorrow.

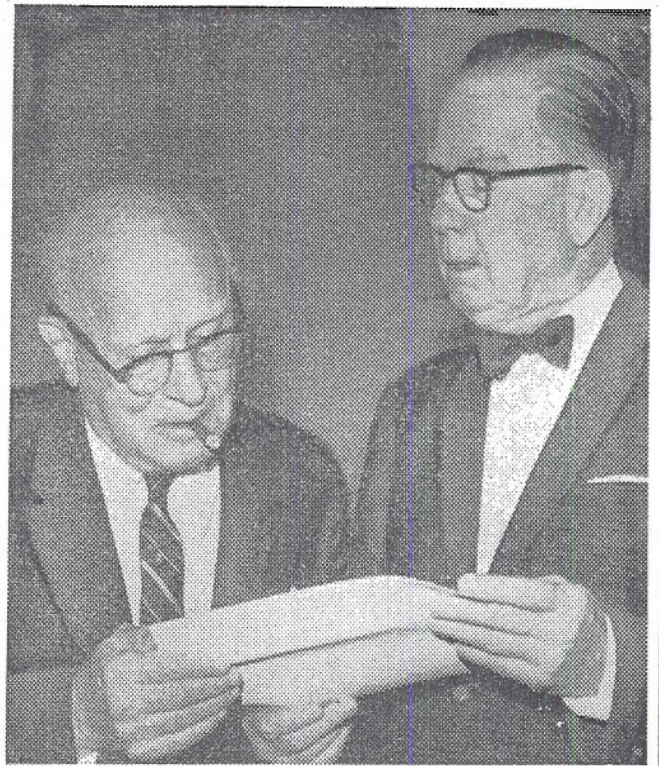
At one point Mr. Clark chided Senator Hruska for taking what he called "flyspeck" approach to the law. The Attorney General urged repeatedly that Congress "get on with something that really protects the public."

Senator Hruska cited the New York City gun control law—which he said had grown from a 50 cent registration fee into a \$20 tax on gun ownership—as proof that gun regulation tended to evolve into gun abolition.

### Dodd Seeks Amendment

Mr. Clark replied that public pressure for abolition of all gun ownership would not come if Congress would enact effective gun curbs now. He said he was positive this would reduce violent crime noticeably and would therefore head off further public revulsion against guns.

The Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to meet on Wednesday. Gun control proponents have been pressing for a vote on the mail order bill then, whether or not Mr. Hruska and Mr. Thurmond have completed their questioning of witnesses.



Associated Press

Representative Emanuel Celler, left, Brooklyn Democrat, with Representative William M. Colmer, Mississippi Democrat who heads the Rules Committee, before the hearing.

Senator Thomas J. Dodd, chairman of the subcommittee on juvenile delinquency, which is conducting the hearings, announced today that he would offer an amendment to put into effect immediately the recently enacted ban on mail order sales of hand guns.

Senator Dodd said a few "gun-runner" importers were obtaining licenses to bring in a huge stockpile of cheap foreign guns before the Dec. 16 effective date of the law.

So far this year 1.3 million guns have been imported, he said, and licenses for 300,000 more have been granted by the State Department. Previously, about one million guns a year were imported.

James V. Bennett, president of the National Council for a Responsible Firearms Policy, showed the Senate Judiciary Committee suitcases and boxes crammed with petitions calling for strict gun controls. He said they bore more than a million signatures.