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BRIEFS

Agency considers bullet ban

WASHINGTON — While Congress considers legislation to impose new handgun controls, the Consumer Product Safety Commission is moving ahead on a related issue that could virtually ban the weapons in America.

Within two weeks the commission, under federal court order, will begin deliberations on a petition to ban handgun bullets as a hazardous substance.

If the agency outlaws pistol bullets, the commission has said, "the practical effect . . . would be a virtual ban on handguns," a prohibition unlikely to be enacted by Congress this session.

Some long guns also would be affected, firearms experts assert, because bullets for some handgun calibers are identical to those for rifles.

The petition does not seek to ban cartridges, casings, primers and powder.

This back-door approach to ban handguns by outlawing pistol bullets is the idea of the Chicago based Committee for Handgun control, founded by four suburban mothers.