

3 Days Until Assault Weapons Ban Expires: Rothman, Local Law Enforcement Officials, Gun Control Advo

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Rothman, Local Law Enforcement Officials, Gun Control Advocates Call For House GOP Leadership To Schedule Immediate Vote To Renew & Strengthen Ban

Hackensack, NJ - With just three days left until the ten year federal ban on assault weapons expires, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-Fair Lawn) today repeated his call for the House Republican leadership to schedule an immediate vote to renew and strengthen the ban. Rothman was joined by local enforcement officers and gun control advocates in lobbying for congressional action on the ban, which is supported by more than three-quarters of Americans nationwide. The Senate approved a renewal of the ban earlier this year, but the House has not voted on the matter because the House Republican leadership refuses to allow a vote.

"For ten years, the assault weapons ban has helped keep semi-automatic assault weapons off the market, off our streets, and out of the hands of gangs, terrorists, and drug dealers," Rothman said. "It is imperative that the House Republican leadership schedule an immediate vote to renew and strengthen the assault weapons ban so that these deadly weapons are not allowed on our streets again. These are not the weapons people use for hunting deer or wild game. The sole purpose of these assault weapons is to kill as many people as quickly as possible."

Unless Congress and the President act, the assault weapons ban will expire on Monday, September 13. The ban, which was approved in 1994, prohibits the domestic manufacture, import, and sale of 19 types of semi-automatic assault weapons such as AK-47s, Tec-9s, and Uzis, as well as dozens of other weapons, which are designed to kill quickly and violently. Unlike weapons firing single rounds, assault weapons are designed to spray many bullets into a single area, as opposed to a single target, increasing the chances of innocent bystanders being caught in a crossfire. In addition, many of the banned weapons have high capacity clips holding up to 30 rounds of ammunition.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), there has been a 66 percent reduction in the number of traced crimes committed with assault weapons since the ban went into effect. A study of FBI data by the Violence Policy Center, however, reveals that one in five law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty between January 1, 1998 and December 31, 2001 were killed with assault weapons, which serves as further proof that the assault weapons ban not only needs to be renewed, but strengthened. Rothman is a cosponsor of a bill to renew the ban for another ten years as well as another bill to strengthen the ban by adding new weapons to the prohibited list and making it permanent.

"The Second Amendment to the United States Constitution allows people to own firearms. The question is where we should draw the line," Rothman said. "Should people be allowed to have shoulder-fired rocket launchers to take down airplanes? Of course not. Well you don't need a semi-automatic weapon that can fire off 30 shots in a matter of seconds to take down a deer. We need to renew and strengthen the federal ban on assault weapons."

The assault weapons ban is supported by virtually every federal, state, and local law enforcement agency, including the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriff's Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major City Chiefs Association, and the International Brotherhood of Police Officers.

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