



SHERIFF

P.O. BOX 512 RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA 92502 (951) 955-2400 FAX (951) 955-2428

February 1, 2013

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Opposed to "Assault Weapons Ban of 2013"

Dear Senator Feinstein:

I serve as the elected Sheriff of Riverside County and have done so since 2007. Riverside County, at nearly 2.3 million residents, is California's 4th most populous, as well as the 4th largest in sheer physical size at 7,300 sq miles, of our State's 58 counties. The Riverside County Sheriff's Department, at nearly 2,200 sworn employees and nearly 4,000 full-time employees is the 5th largest of California's police and sheriff's departments. In addition to providing court security, coroner operations, and jail operations, the Sheriff's Department provides police services under contract to 17 of our county's 28 cities.

I have served in full-time sworn California law enforcement since 1975, first as a city police officer, and then within the Riverside County Sheriff's Department. I also was commissioned as an Army officer and retired from the Army Reserve as a colonel after 30 years of service. I have had over 4 decades of participation in the various shooting sports, and am very familiar with public safety, the criminal justice system, military weapons, and the firearms policy issues involved in both past and current debates on gun control.

I have taken the time to review the materials your office has put out publicly on your recently proposed federal legislation "Assault Weapons Ban of 2013". Although our state and local law enforcement agencies do not enforce federal laws, and you have served our State well over many years in many ways, I do not support this proposed legislation, and I recommend others in Congress also oppose it.

In many ways your bill unreasonably impinges on the Second Amendment, and it focuses largely on purely "cosmetic" features of legitimate sporting, hunting, and recreational firearms already in widespread use within our nation. The cosmetic issues alone cause far

too much meaningless complexity for law enforcement officers, and worse, could cause common citizens to unintentionally commit crimes that have serious potential sanctions.

What really concerns me is that the term “assault weapon or assault rifle” is a misnomer, coined by gun control advocates that also incorrectly use that term with the phrase “weapons of war (or, “weapons from the battlefield”) have no business on our civilian streets”, in an effort to frighten or confuse the public. Even a little research will underscore that military “assault rifles” fire fully automatic, or 3-round burst, and that military feature is their defining characteristic. These civilian-style semi-automatic rifles are essentially no different – other than cosmetics – than millions of other semi-automatic rifles used by civilians for hunting, competition and sporting purposes – for generations of Americans for over a century.

Many of our state and local law enforcement agencies authorize these very same civilian-style semi-automatic rifles that are subject to your ban for self-purchase, in lieu of spending increasingly scarce taxpayer dollars, to practice with and to use on-duty as patrol rifles in order to defend themselves, for use at the distances we see in our rural areas. It would seem that same self-defense use for our citizens, not in law enforcement, in much of our nation’s rural areas, should also be part of their inherent right pursuant to the Second Amendment. In this same fashion, some of the shotguns you seek to ban are used by our officers and should also be available to citizens for hunting, recreation and self-defense as well. Again the cosmetic attributes seem to be the defining criteria.

The central target of your proposed bill – the AR-15 series platform – is probably the most prolific rifle platform in our country today. It is enormously popular because it is “uniquely American”, modular, adaptable for the size and sex of the user, and is capable of multiple uses: hunting, competition, recreational shooting and self-defense. Because of the generally high costs involved in those rifles, it is relatively rare that law enforcement comes into contact with them in contrast to smaller, more concealable, and cheaper firearms.

The AR-15 series semi-automatic rifle is literally a modern American “musket”, and that is evidenced by the massive panic-buying going today as a result of your proposed bill and still others at the state level.

I think all of us universally support increased efforts in keeping firearms (and other weapons) out of the hands of those who should not have them, and increased sanctions for those who willfully misuse them. In your own State, California, we could dearly use greatly increased funding for our overcrowded local jails and state prisons, so that those very sanctions would have some meaning and deterrent value.

I thank you for your long and distinguished service to our State and to our Nation, but I urge you to abandon this bill, as it is really a “pretext gun control” bill for increased regulations that are unreasonable and unnecessary. And, I believe it is overreaching within the context of our Second Amendment. It places legitimate citizens, both now and in the future, at potential risk of not being able to lawfully defend themselves, or to

participate in legitimate recreational shooting sports that should be available to all across our great nation. In the end, I believe this proposed bill will cause far more harm than any good.

I remain at your service, and can be reached in Riverside at (951) 955-0147 for any further information or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stan Sniff', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Stan Sniff, Sheriff
Riverside County Sheriff's Department

cc: The Honorable Barbara Boxer, United States Senator