

HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS BEFORE THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES October 4, 2004

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of HR 3193, the District of Columbia Personal Protection Act. I am a cosponsor of this legislation that ensures greater respect for the right to bear arms in Washington, D.C.

HR 3193 repeals several of the more draconian citywide Washington, D.C. gun restrictions enacted in 1976. Restrictions HR 3193 will repeal include the requirement that all firearms be registered. Gun registration in other countries has created government lists of who owns what guns. Such lists facilitate the harassment of gun owners and the confiscation of their guns. Also repealed are blanket bans on the possession of handguns and handgun ammunition as well as of any semi-automatic guns. These bans exist despite the fact that handguns and semi-automatic guns are regularly used outside Washington, D.C. for self-defense. Also repealed is the prohibition on carrying a gun on one's own property! It is hard to say a person is free if he is prohibited from using the means of protecting himself and his family even in his own home.

It is unfortunate that people in the federal capital city have for nearly thirty years faced some of the most restrictive gun control laws in the country. This fact is particularly unfortunate given Washington, D.C.'s recent history as the murder capital of the United States. Ironically, the place where people most need to bear arms to defend themselves from violent crime has been one of places where the exercise of that right has been most restricted.

A strong case can be made that the high rate of violent crimes, including murders, in Washington, D.C. is due in part to restrictions on the exercise of the right to bear arms. When potential victims are likely armed, criminals think twice about committing violent crimes: a gun in the hands of a law-abiding citizen is an excellent deterrent to crime. Across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., Virginia does not have this horrific crime and murder rate. Yet, people in Virginia can buy, own, and even carry guns in public.

I am hopeful that the House's consideration of HR 3193 indicates a new openness to legislation that will roll back other unconstitutional and dangerous restrictions on Americans' right to bear arms. For years, federal lawmakers have been passing gun control laws, even though they

have no authority to do so. Crime control, the stated reason for passing gun control laws in the first place, is a function belonging to the states.

Enacting HR 3193 would be a good first step in adopting legislation to restore the federal government's respect for the right to bear arms throughout the United States. The federal government has trampled on gun rights nationwide-not just in Washington, D.C. I have introduced several pieces of legislation this Congress that would help restore respect for the right to bear arms, including the Second Amendment Protection Act, HR 153, that would repeal the now-sunset semi-auto ban, repeal the five-day waiting period and "instant" background check imposed on gun purchases, and delete the "sporting purposes" test that allows the Treasury Secretary to classify a firearm as a destructive device simply because the Secretary deems the gun to be "non-sporting." Additionally, Congress should consider my Right to Keep and Bear Arms Act, HR 3125, that prohibits United States taxpayers' dollars from being used to support or promote any United Nations actions that could infringe on the Second Amendment.

In 1976, I spoke on the floor of House against the adoption of restrictions on the right to bear arms in Washington, D.C. that HR 3193 seeks to repeal. Unfortunately, my argument then was ruled out of order, and the restrictions went into effect. While it has been too long in coming, I am glad that the House is finally considering this important issue. The District of Columbia Personal Protection Act would restore some much-needed respect for the fundamental rights of people in Washington, D.C.