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Mayor

TESTIMONY OF
MAYOR JOHN M. FABRIZI
CITY OF BRIDGEPORT

TO THE
Judiciary Committee

Tuesday, April 10, 2007

Good afternoon. My name is John M. Fabrizio, Mayor of the City of Bridgeport. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address the members of the Judiciary Committee regarding S.B. 903, S.B. 904, H.B. No. 6901: Acts which require the reporting of lost or stolen firearms.

I am here today in support of these bills, which would require the reporting of a lost or stolen firearm to the police within 72 hours. It is critical that we keep guns out of the hands of criminals and keep them out of the hands of our youth. Gun violence is not only an issue for the City of Bridgeport and large urban centers, but for the entire state. Gun violence in Connecticut has increased by 38% since 2005 and by 78% since 2002. In Bridgeport alone, murders with guns have increased from 11 in 2002 to 20 in 2006. Statistically, gun related crimes affect cities and minorities disproportionately to the rest of the state. We need this action to make cities safer for all our residents, especially our children.

People who cannot legally own a gun, such as criminals and juveniles, commit most gun crimes and often get their firearms from gun traffickers, or straw persons, who obtain them through legal means and then re-sell them to people who cannot legally purchase them. It defies logic that the requirement to report stolen or lost firearms does not exist and I urge you to close this loophole. If certain sellers were constantly reporting stolen guns they would be targeted for an investigation and if they didn't report them, they could be prosecuted, thus creating a Catch-22 situation for these individuals - a Catch 22 with serious consequence.

Currently, traffickers are rarely prosecuted. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of gun prosecution is for criminal possession of a gun. However, by the time the criminal with the gun is arrested, the crime has already been committed. There must be penalties for not reporting stolen and lost firearms. By allowing this loophole to exist, traffickers will continue to arm criminals and the likelihood of firearms ending up in the hands of a juvenile greatly increases. The only way to help prevent these situations is to require the reporting of stolen and lost guns and to have strong consequences for failing to do so.

Furthermore, there is consensus among law enforcement agencies that if guns were reported stolen or lost, it would begin a nationwide process to recover the firearm and return it to its legal owner more quickly. Responsible, legal, firearm owners typically store them in a safe place and report the stolen or lost firearm to the police for safety and insurance purposes. Traffickers don't want to report stolen firearms - they want to continue supplying firearms illegally.

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of Connecticut residents support these bills. I urge you to pass this legislation, close this loophole, and show our residents that we are serious about fighting gun violence and the illegal trafficking of guns in our communities.

Thank you