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IN OPPOSITION to SB 603 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AMMUNITION CODING.

by Robert T. Crook, Director

Bullet serialization is a de facto ban on ammunition for the State of CT.

This proposal is recycling old gun control schemes that have been imposed, repealed, and are now proposed again. It goes to the theme that without ammunition you can't shoot.

The 1968 Gun Control Act imposed specific record-keeping requirements on the sale of ammunition. During the debate over the 1986 Firearms' Owners Protection Act, the U.S. Treasury Dept. testified that the ammunition record-keeping requirement was of no use in fighting crime and repealed it in 1983 (.22 rimfire) and 1986 (center-fire handguns), because it burdened purchasers, vendors and police, with no law enforcement benefit.

The motive for serialization is stated to be to help law enforcement curtail criminals and crime. The theory is that bullets recovered from a crime scene can be matched with the purchaser. Ask the Maryland State Police about their experiences with MD's Ballistic "Fingerprinting" system. Designed to accomplish the same goals and provide help to law enforcement, the system has been declared a failure and the MD Police Forensic Sciences Div. has called for scrapping their program. New York has a similar story. Both states spent millions of implementation dollars. Ballistic imaging is not exactly the same as serialization, but similar in theory and practicality.

Bullet serialization legislation recently failed in California after numerous law-enforcement groups, including the California Police Chiefs' Association, the California Peace Officers' Association, the Association of Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs and the Los Angeles Police Protective League urged lawmakers to vote it down. In addition, it has been defeated in the following states: Hawaii, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, and Mississippi. There has been no peer review of studies on this concept.

What is "handgun or assault weapon ammunition"? Few in this legislature or the State Police could define "assault weapon" unless you accept the CSP definition "if it looks like a duck, quacks ..., it is a duck." More important many calibers are interchangeable between handguns/assault weapons and standard hunting rifles (.22 Cal, .223 Cal, 9mm, 30-06, 7mm, .357 Cal, 44-40, 45-70 and many others). Are we now to criminalize legitimate hunters ?

Ammunition manufacturers attempting to serialize ammo would face a dramatic slowdown in the production process which would translate into substantially lower sales/profitability and ultimately force major ammunition manufacturers to abandon the CT market affecting all consumers, including federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. They will have no choice! Good business practices and obligations to their stockholders would demand it. If serialized manufacturing were successful there would be substantial price increases to all. What about foreign made ammunition?

Reducing the availability and affordability of training ammunition would result in degrading both police and civilian marksmanship. Boy Scouts, the CT Junior Rifle Team, Club and National CT teams would all be affected.

Reloading (re-using cartridge cases multiple times) would be abolished.

Sales of antique ammunition to collectors would be eliminated.

Will Muzzleloaders be affected since they shoot pistol bullets in Sabot rounds?

How will a "private person" dispose of ammunition? Will they be reimbursed by the state?

What happens when the bullet manufacturer is not the same corporate entity as the ammunition entity?

Will there be outsourcing to match bullet numbers to cases?

Will criminals simply buy their ammunition out of state?

What are the record-keeping costs to DPS in IT to develop the databases and search systems to keep track of the new "codes."

We strongly urge rejection of this concept. Put bluntly, it severely imposes on the legitimate citizen while demonstrating no proof it is a viable crime control tool.