

Raised Bill № 353

LCO No. 04646

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SUBJ: (b) Raised Bill № 353: An Act Concerning the Micro-Stamping of Semi-Automatic Pistols

1. I am opposed to Bill № 353.

2. I am a National Rifle Association (NRA) Training Counselor. In my capacity I can teach individuals the basics of firearms as an instructor and I can take qualified individuals and train and certify them as NRA instructors in any discipline for which I am certified. I am currently certified as an instructor for home firearm safety, muzzleloading rifle, muzzle-loading shotgun, pistol, personal protection, rifle, shotgun, Refuse to be a Victim, metallic cartridge reloading, and shot shell reloading; I am also a chief range safety officer. I am certified as an instructor for the CT Dept of Environmental Protection to teach the CT Education/Firearm Safety course and the bow hunting course. I have been active in scouting for over 25 years and have served as the shooting sports director at June Norcross Webster Scout Reservation (JNWSR) in Ashford CT since 2000; this camp is operated by the Connecticut Rivers Council Boys Scouts of America (CRC-BSA). I am a retired naval officer, having started in the naval reserve as a seaman recruit. I served approximately 35 months in the Vietnam combat zone. I am well versed in the use of firearms. Whenever I teach any course involving firearms, I place great emphasis on safety above all. In 2007 I wrote the syllabus for the BB-gun course for CRC-BSA. This syllabus was reviewed by Mr John Lamb, Dept of Public Health, Youth Camp Licensing, and Ms Valerie L. Bryan, RN, Supervising Nurse Consultant, Community Based Regulation Section, Dept of Public Health, State of Connecticut. The Dept of Public Health has determined that my course meets the training requirements to run a BB-gun range safely.

3. At the scout reservation we use .22 caliber (cal) LR ammunition. The Venture Crew members are thus able to earn their venturing awards in rifle, air rifle, shotgun, archery, muzzle-loading rifle, air pistol, and pistol, provided they qualify in the practical portion of their award; the practical portion includes **knowledge, skill, and attitude**, any one of which may disqualify a Venture Crew member from earning his/her award. The .22 cal LR is the only type of cartridge ammunition we use on the range for the pistols because it is readily available and less expensive than larger (center-fire) caliber ammunition. During the summer of 2008 JNWSR expended approximately 6500 rounds of .22 cal LR ammunition using pistols and revolvers. This coming summer the Venture Crews will again be able to qualify for their venturing awards using pistols, .22 cal single action revolvers and the .22 cal semi-automatic pistols. Before any Venture Crew members even touch a firearm, they receive a 30-40 minute lecture on firearm and archery safety. The Venture Crew members concentrating on shooting sports receive a minimum of five hours of safety lectures before they touch a pistol/revolver. As you can tell, my camp director, Mr Patrick S. Boyd, and I believe in safety first!

4. My main concern is the ramifications that this law will have on the scouting movement in the state. The semi-automatic pistols purchased by the Connecticut Rivers Council are listed under my name because I am the shooting sports director at JNWSR. During the off-season they are locked in my gun safe, anxiously awaiting the next camping season. I have been the shooting sports director for many seasons now. After January 2011, does this mean that I will have to continue to be the director because I will not be able to transfer the pistols to any other Scouter in the Council? I too may want to retire someday. Some of my confusion may be caused by the definition of "at retail". This can take on many meanings depending on the individual doing the interpreting.

5. Imprinting a semi-automatic pistol's "signature" on a cartridge in two or more places is interesting in theory, but not practical. At any rod and gun club, especially during competitions, a semi-automatic pistol will extract and fling the empty casing up to several yards away. I usually collect my brass for reloading; it is cheaper to enjoy the sport that way. But what happens if some empty casings are picked up by my nearest competitor by mistake (it is hard to read a microscopic array of characters under competitive conditions) or find their way into the grass or under some leaves to be picked up later by unknown individuals? There are many cartridges that can be fired by both a revolver and a semiautomatic pistol. This unknown individual could easily commit a crime with a revolver or semi-automatic pistol, collect his own brass, but leave behind the brass collected at the pistol range, implicating an innocent person. Another problem arises with the reloading of empty brass. Good brass can be reloaded several times, with the pistol superimposing one imprinted micro-stamp over another, essentially making the microscopic array of characters illegible. Or reloaded brass that has already been imprinted can be fired in the semi-automatic from out-of-state that does not have the imprinting capability, again placing an innocent gun owner at risk.

6. The engineering aspects of micro-stamping cartridges will definitely pose an engineering headache. The imprinting should occur while the cartridge is in the chamber just after it has been fired. I have listed the approximate maximum pressures that a cartridge must withstand at the moment of ignition for several calibers of automatic pistols:

9 mm Luger	~ 32,000 psi (approximate pounds per square inch)
.38 cal Super Auto	~ 31,000 psi
.357 Sig	~ 38,000 psi
.357 Magnum	~ 33,000 psi
.45 cal Auto	~ 20,000 psi

This data was obtained from the Lyman Reloading Handbook, © Dec 2008, 49th ed. It must be noted that maximum pressures vary based on the manufacturer of the casing, the primer, powder, and manufacturer and weight of the projectile.

Unfortunately, I was unable to find the approximate maximum pressures involved with the .22 cal LR cartridge on such short notice for this public hearing; these pressures are more difficult to find since rimfire casings are not reloaded. The base of the cartridge is the strongest part of the cartridge, but the primer metal is weaker. A firing pin could imprint this information. But what happens when firing pins are changed out or replaced? A fine metal file could easily make the micro-stamped characters on the firing pin illegible. If a manufacturer could obtain the machine small enough to encode this information on the side of the chamber wall, the expansion of the case against the chamber wall upon firing could cause the imprinting of the information on the empty casing; but as the casing is ejected, friction from the rest of the chamber could cause the information to be obliterated. If the encoded information is deep enough in the chamber wall, the imprinted information on the empty casing could create enough friction to prevent the casing from being ejected, thus making the firearm a single shot pistol.

7. The next problem arises when a semi-automatic pistol has a mechanical failure. The owner would take the firearm to a reputable gunsmith for repair usually through a gun dealer. Upon completion of repairs, the dealer charges the owner for the repairs, but would then be prohibited from returning/transferring the firearm to the owner because the firearm doesn't meet the cartridge imprinting requirements. This could very well upset the gun owner.

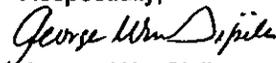
8. Please consider the impact that this will have on the semi-automatic pistols that are issued to active duty military, the National Guard, federal agents (FBI, IRS, etc.), state police, local police, and various security agencies. How will this bill affect them? This bill will definitely increase the cost to the tax payers who would indirectly absorb the increased cost in purchasing new firearms for the state police, local law enforcement personnel, and private security agencies. Will the security guards on the Indian reservations be exempt?

9. Another problem that arises is the introduction of firearms from across the state lines into Connecticut. Even if it is classified as illegal, this still doesn't prevent their introduction into the state, especially by the criminal element. Most of them (the criminal element) would not be stupid enough to employ a firearm that could be traced back to them anyway; they would use a stolen firearm. However, on the bright side, some criminals are stupid. The enforcement of this law will be very difficult; it will be impossible to stop the transfer from other states. It is already difficult enough trying to stop the introduction of illegal drugs into the state even though we have the advantage in that the illegal drugs are also illegal elsewhere. It is almost impossible to keep firearms out of the hands of felons and many individuals in street gangs; they don't bother with the prerequisite carry permits. Look how difficult it is to stop the export of automatic weapons by the Customs and Border Patrol agents from the United States into the hands of the drug lords of Mexico.

10. We should enforce the existing laws that we have more rigidly. Remember, it is already a crime to possess a pistol/revolver outside your home or place of business without a permit. Let's aggressively punish the individuals that do use guns to commit crimes, especially those who have been convicted at least twice of a serious crime. It is a crime for felons to possess firearms. Please remember that a murder by an individual using a firearm or driving a car ends in the same result; the victim is dead.

11. The individuals that would be affected by this bill are the law-abiding individuals. A criminal will care very little about leaving empty casings behind when he is using a stolen semi-automatic pistol. It is sincerely hoped that this bill is not just another means of restricting our 2nd Amendment rights as guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution.

12. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Respectfully,

George Wm Sipila