

Altmire Leads Effort to Protect Gun Owners' Rights

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House Votes to Uphold Supreme Court Decision on Second Amendment

September 17, 2008

(Washington, D.C.) – The U.S. House of Representatives today passed legislation amended by Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) and fellow conservative Democrats that will protect Americans’ constitutional right to own firearms. On June 26, the Supreme Court ruled that District of Columbia residents have the right to own guns – overturning the District’s unconstitutional ban on firearms that had been in effect for the past 32 years. Congressman Altmire previously signed an amicus brief urging the Supreme Court to overturn the gun ban. However, in the wake of this decision, the D.C. City Council passed a new law which limits D.C. residents’ right to bear arms and undermines Americans’ constitutional rights. In July, Congressman Altmire introduced the Second Amendment Enforcement Act (H.R. 6691) to protect D.C. residents’ right to bear arms and ensure that the intent of the Supreme Court and the Second Amendment are upheld for all citizens.

“When the D.C. City Council decided to ignore a ruling from the U.S. Supreme Court and play games with the Constitution of the United States, they brought us to the point where congressional intervention was necessary. I was outraged at the D.C. Council’s new gun restrictions, which denied Washington D.C. citizens their Second Amendment rights,” said Congressman Altmire. “In response, I worked with fellow conservative Democrats to craft and introduce the Second Amendment Enforcement Act in order to ensure that the government does not infringe upon the rights of law-abiding citizens in the District of Columbia.”

The Second Amendment Enforcement Act – which is endorsed by the National Rifle Association – will protect D.C. residents’ right to bear arms by:

- Restoring the Right of Self Defense in the Home: Current D.C. law requires gun owners to render their firearms inoperable, thus useless, unless they are in imminent danger of an attack or an attack is underway – an unrealistic and overly restrictive approach. This legislation would repeal that law and allow gun owners to keep their firearms stored in such a way that they would be readily available for self defense purposes.
- Authorizing Purchases of Firearms by D.C. residents: D.C. residents are effectively barred from purchasing a firearm because there are no federally licensed firearms dealers in D.C. and federal law prohibits individuals from purchasing firearms outside their states of residence. To fix this, the Second Amendment Enforcement Act will enable D.C. residents to legally purchase guns from a federally licensed dealer in Maryland or Virginia.
- Repealing Overly Restrictive Registration Requirement: The D.C. Council has created an overly restrictive registration scheme that unfairly restricts citizens’ rights to legally own firearms. This legislation restores the Second Amendment rights of D.C. citizens by removing the lengthy and burdensome procedures put in place by the D.C. Council.
- Repealing the D.C. Semiautomatic Ban: Although the Supreme Court ruled that the D.C. government could not restrict the ownership of handguns, current D.C. law circumvents the ruling by defining most handguns as machine guns. To restore the right of D.C. citizens to own a handgun for the purposes of self defense, this legislation eliminates

D.C.'s overly broad definition of machine gun and instead utilizes the definition that currently exists in Federal law.

The text of the Second Amendment Enforcement Act was adopted today by a vote of 260 to 160 as an amendment to the National Capitol Security and Safety Act (H.R. 6842). The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.