

LOCALNEWS

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A do-nothing symbolic law that sends a soap box message

By C.D. Michel

On Nov. 4, a divided Long Beach City Council voted 6-3 to adopt a prepackaged ordinance written by the gun control lobby that bans the sale, but not the possession, of .50 caliber firearms in the city. The ordinance will come up for another vote on Tuesday.

The law is a solution in search of a problem. To be legal, all gun sales must go through a licensed gun retailer. There are only three licensed gun retailers left in Long Beach — two Big 5 Sporting Goods stores and a gun repair shop. Those retailers, who can easily be monitored by the LBPd, do not sell and have not sold .50 caliber firearms. So the ordinance will actually regulate nothing.

Even City Prosecutor Tom Reeves, who wrote the law at the instruction of the council, has acknowledged that the law is "effectively useless" and has "no practical application." Just more paper to thicken the municipal code book.

The guns that would be banned from sale under this ordinance are not machine guns (already banned) nor .50 caliber "assault weapons" (already banned). They are typically simple, basic, single-shot, bolt-action rifles used in competitive shooting events and for big game

hunting. These firearms have been available to the civilian public for roughly 80 years. They are heavy, weighing 20 or 30 pounds. And they are expensive, typically costing \$2,500 to \$10,000. Their maximum effective range is only slightly farther than many guns of smaller caliber.

Proponents claim these firearms pose a terrorist threat, and are too powerful for civilians to possess. Invoking the terrorism angle is shameful and crass political opportunism. A .50 caliber rifle would be a terrorist's peashooter. Many larger caliber or more powerful firearms are available to terrorists along with explosives, shoulder-launched rocket-propelled grenades, and, for that matter, suitcase nuclear "dirty" bombs.

Despite threat assessment mechanisms, neither the FBI, the Transportation Safety Administration, nor the Department of Homeland Security has issued any warnings regarding the potential for terrorists to use a .50 caliber firearm, because they do not view the relative threat as credible.

No one in this country has ever been killed with a .50 caliber rifle. In fact, there are scant records of them ever actually being used in committing a crime in this country.

Cut and paste misrepresentations about the guns, supplied to the City Council by the gun ban lobby, are deliberately misleading — showing damage that can be done if illegal explosive ammunition is used. But many smaller caliber firearms, if firing illegal explosive ammunition, will cause similar damage. That is why mere possession of explosive ammunition is already a felony with mandatory prison time.

This proposal is just the latest incremental effort by the gun ban lobby to demonize and eventually ban most or all firearms from civilian possession. They already went after the ones that were "too small," and the ones that were supposedly the "criminal's choice," now they want the ones that are simply "too big." But under this Goldilocks gun control approach, no gun is "just right." Once the .50 caliber is banned under the broadly applicable rationale urged now, next larger "too big" caliber will soon follow, and so on.

Several other jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies have recognized this, seen through the lies, and rejected this proposal. But some members of the Long Beach Council were determined to "send a message." What message? Gun owners, target shooters, and hunters under-

stand firearm technology enough spot the lies being used to justify the law, see that it regulates sale that never take place, and attack their sport. So the threatening, insulting, and dismissive message they get is: "You don't count."

In response, these citizens turn sending messages and making symbolic gestures themselves. Toward that end, the city's municipal activities in a number of areas are currently under legal scrutiny. The new law is itself subject to legal challenge because it conflicts with a state law on the subject, as a Los Angeles deputy city attorney candidly warned about a similarly worded ordinance adopted in that city.

Lawsuits are regrettable, but inevitable. The price paid for passing do-nothing symbolic laws that send soap box messages, it seems, symbolic responses that cost real money.

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