

Perspective

EDITORIALS
READERS' VIEWS

Section G

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SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIAL

Anti-gun advocates advance a hidden agenda

By CHUCK MICHEL

The Santa Barbara City Council is set to consider a proposed ban on affordable self-defense handguns in the coming weeks. Promoted by Handgun Control Inc. (HCI) affiliated Women Against Gun Violence, the laws' supporters have again attached a nasty emotion-laden buzzword to the class of firearms they are targeting to ban this time, and are hiding their political agenda behind distorted statistics and emotional pleas.

Though disguised and professionally promoted as a crime and safety measure, the proposed ordinance advances HCI's agenda to control all guns out of the hands of all citizens — self-reliance

Chuck Michel formerly was a criminal prosecutor to the Christopher Commission investigating the Los Angeles Police Department. He represents the NRA and the CRPA in challenging these laws

and the right to self-defense be damned.

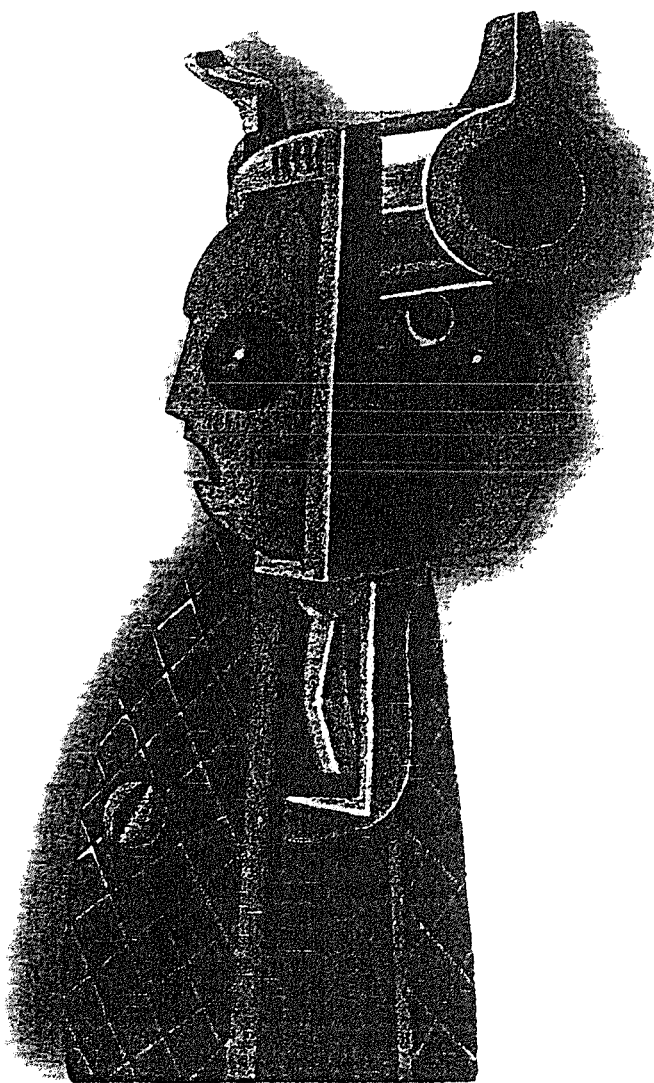
That is why, if you read the fine print, you find the ordinance can be and will be used to ban the sale of some of the finest guns made, including those worn by most police officers. Gov. Pete Wilson recently vetoed a state "Saturday night special" law for this very reason.

HCI is counting on residents to not read the law, and to overlook the fact that gun violence is overwhelmingly a by-product of drug and gang-related crime. These criminals do not stop using the tools of their trade simply because they can't buy some cheap guns in gun stores.

Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) and state Department of Justice (DOJ) statistics show that less than 10 percent of the guns used in crimes are bought in gun stores. Yet that is all this ordinance purports to address. Private party transfers, even through a gun store, are not banned.

The drug dealers and gang members who most often criminally possess a gun tend to acquire their guns illegally — by stealing them, buying them from non-licensed dealers, or borrowing them.

HCI itself relies on BATF and DOJ statistics showing unequivocally that criminals prefer large-caliber, high-



quality guns. The overwhelming weapon of choice among these criminals is the 9mm semi-automatic handgun. These guns typically cost \$400 to \$700.

Has the police chief told you what percent of these guns are involved in crime in your city? Statewide, the Department of Justice reports a rate around 10-13 percent. But these guns comprise almost a third of the handgun market. So, actually, they are under-represented in crime.

And ask yourself: If sales of "Saturday night specials" are banned, won't criminals — to the extent they use small caliber guns to begin with — simply substitute bigger and thus deadlier guns?

Inexpensive guns aren't unsafe either. Some inexpensive guns aren't a good value, particularly if the gun will be subjected to heavy use. But they do not blow up or melt as HCI advocates preposterously claim. If these guns are truly unsafe, why does the ordinance exempt law enforcement officers from its provisions? Aren't police worthy of this government protection?

California gun manufacturers are concerned about the safety of their products. They have to be. Thanks to plaintiffs' lawyers, their business depends on it. This year, they even worked in Sacramento to pass a true product safety law which would have imposed FBI-approved manufacturing standards on all California gun makers.

Tellingly HCI vehemently opposed the law, because HCI wants to ban guns, not make them safer. Last month, HCI succeeded in killing this sensible law in committee. The gun makers have voluntarily adopted most of the standards anyway.

So banning the sale of certain guns by gun dealers does not address crime or safety. Worse yet, it can be "spun" to look like it does. This is symbolic government at its worst.

Even without lawsuits, which have cost West Hollywood almost \$300,000 so far — despite being promised pro bono legal aid — this law doesn't just sit on the books. The San Jose Police Department estimates it will cost around \$100,000 per year just to administer the law.

Most of the cities that passed the law

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58 JOHNSON