

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE SEEKS TO CORRECT GUN CONTROL ENFORCEMENT INEQUITIES

WASHINGTON -- In testimony today before the Senate Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on the Constitution, Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) said that thousands of gun collectors, dealers and others have suffered "public embarrassment, needless legal defense expenses, impaired credit ratings, and much mental pain and suffering" due to arbitrary enforcement of the Gun Control Act.

Today's hearing was the first held this Congress by the Senate Judiciary Committee, which has oversight responsibilities over the Gun Control Act.

Dole and Senator James McClure (R-Idaho) are currently sponsoring remedial legislation to correct some of the more obvious defects of the 1968 act. Included in these defects are definitional ambiguities in such key terms as "dealer," "collector" and "engaging in the business of."

"This vagueness has allowed overzealous federal agents to apply conflicting and arbitrary standards in their enforcement activities, to the detriment of thousands of individual collectors, dealers and other law-abiding citizens who have run into 'technical' difficulties under the Gun Control Act," Dole said. "Many of these people find themselves subjected to federal felony charges as a result. In too many cases, this has meant public embarrassment, needless legal defense expenses, impaired credit ratings, and much mental pain and suffering.

"At the same time, referrals from other enforcement authorities to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of possible gun violations by persons with long criminal records go unanswered."

Dole said that it was encouraging that the new BATF director, Dickerson, is making efforts to eliminate abuses, while at the same time re-order priorities to concentrate more on hard-core criminal activities involving interstate use of firearms or possession by convicted felons.

Earlier this year the Senate Judiciary Committee reported S. 1722, the comprehensive Federal Criminal Code Reform Bill to the Senate. This bill contains provisions authored by Senator Dole which have the effect of down-grading certain administrative and bookkeeping violations of the Gun Control Act from felonies to misdemeanors. This was meant only to be stop-gap, remedial action to cure some of the more glaring deficiencies of the act, pending the comprehensive revisions of the McClure bill.