

# BOB DOLE



(R - Kansas)

SH 141 Hart Building, Washington, D.C. 20510

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CONTACT: WALT RIKER,  
DALE TATE 202/224-3135

## STATEMENT OF SENATE MAJORITY LEADER BOB DOLE

### S. 49

AFTER SEVEN LONG YEARS OF DEBATE AND DELIBERATION, CONGRESS IS FINALLY COMPLETING ACTION ON S. 49, THE FIREARMS OWNERS PROTECTION ACT. LAST SUMMER, THE SENATE DEBATED AND PASSED THIS IMPORTANT LEGISLATION -- THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME IT HAD BEEN CONSIDERED BY THE FULL SENATE SINCE ITS ORIGINAL INTRODUCTION IN 1979. AND AS A LONG TIME SUPPORTER AND COSPONSOR OF THE BILL, I WAS PLEASED TO BE IN A POSITION TO FACILITATE IT BEING BROUGHT UP AND PASSED.

THE FIREARMS OWNERS PROTECTION ACT WOULD CORRECT VARIOUS ABUSES WHICH HAVE OCCURRED UNDER THE GUN CONTROL ACT OF 1968. THE 1968 LAW WAS PASSED DURING AN EMOTIONAL PERIOD, WHEN THE NATION WAS REACTING TO TWO POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS. THE NATIONAL JUDGMENT AT THAT TIME WAS TO TAKE AWAY RIGHTS ENJOYED BY MANY IN ORDER TO PREVENT A RECURRENCE OF THE OUTRAGEOUS ABUSES OF A FEW. EACH YEAR'S EXPERIENCE UNDER THE LAW BROUGHT WITH IT NEW EVIDENCE THAT CONGRESS HAD GONE TOO FAR. HUNTERS, SPORTSMEN, HOBBYISTS AND COLLECTORS WERE BEING PROSECUTED FOR TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS, DIVERTING LIMITED LAW ENFORCEMENT RESOURCES FROM THE PURSUIT OF THOSE GUILTY OF TRULY CRIMINAL FIREARMS USE.

S. 49 IS THE CULMINATION OF SEVEN YEARS OF PAINSTAKING DEBATE AND ANALYSIS OVER THE DEFICIENCIES IN THE 1968 LAW AND HOW THEY CAN BE BEST CORRECTED. I BELIEVE THE LEGISLATION REPRESENTS A GOOD EFFORT TO BALANCE THE RIGHTS OF LAW ABIDING GUN OWNERS WITH THE NEEDS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT. SOME LAW ENFORCEMENT GROUPS HAVE RAISED ADDITIONAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE BILL WHICH WERE NOT AT ISSUE DURING THE SENATE'S CONSIDERATION OF THE BILL LAST SUMMER. I AM GLAD THAT SENATORS MCCLURE AND METZENBAUM, WITH THE HELP AND

SUPPORT OF SENATORS THURMOND AND HATCH, HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AGREE ON A PACKAGE OF TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO ALLAY THESE CONCERNS. OVER THE YEARS, A NUMBER OF REFINEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO S. 49 IN RESPONSE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS, CONSISTENT WITH THE INTENT OF THE PROPONENTS NOT TO UNDERMINE THE 1968 ACT'S PROVISIONS AS THEY APPLY TO CRIMINAL FIREARMS USE.

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED BY SOME THAT THIS LEGISLATION HAS BEEN "STEAM ROLLED" THROUGH THE CONGRESS WITH PAC CONTRIBUTIONS AND POLITICAL STRONG ARM TACTICS. THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS, BILLS DON'T PASS BY A MARGIN OF 79-15 IN THE SENATE AND 292-130 IN THE HOUSE WITHOUT A STRONG BASE OF POPULAR SUPPORT AND STRONG ARGUMENTS ON THE MERITS. THE FIREARMS OWNERS PROTECTION ACT PASSED BY SUCH OVERWHELMING MARGINS BECAUSE OF ITS VAST BASE OF ACTIVE CONSTITUENT SUPPORT.

IN CONCLUDING, LET ME PAY TRIBUTE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SENATE WHO HAVE WORKED SO LONG AND HARD ON THIS BILL TO FINALLY BRING US TO THE POINT WHERE WE ARE TODAY. CREDIT SHOULD GO TO JIM MCCLURE, THE BILL'S PRINCIPAL SPONSOR AND A TIRELESS ADVOCATE FOR GUN OWNERS' RIGHTS. CREDIT SHOULD ALSO GO TO SENATOR HATCH FOR HIS MANY EXCELLENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS LEGISLATION AS THE BILL'S CHIEF PROPONENT IN THE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE AND AS THE FLOOR MANAGER. SENATOR THURMOND SHOULD ALSO BE COMMENDED FOR HIS STRONG LEADERSHIP AS CHAIRMAN OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ON THIS ISSUE.

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO MENTION A NUMBER OF STAFF MEMBERS WHO HAVE DONE AN OUTSTANDING JOB ON THIS BILL: RANDY RADER, WITH SEN. HATCH, MIKE HAMMOND WITH THE STEERING COMMITTEE, NANCY NORRELL WITH SEN. MCCLURE, AND TERRY WOOTEN AND DIANA WATERMAN WITH SEN. THURMOND. ON THE DEMOCRATIC SIDE, I BELIEVE MENTION SHOULD ALSO BE MADE OF EDDIE CORREA WITH SEN. METZENBAUM, JERRY TINKER WITH SEN. KENNEDY, AND SCOTT GREEN WITH SEN. BIDEN.

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