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Senate passes bill requiring handgun child-safety locks

Democrats hope the vote will result in continuing support for amendments to a controversial gun bill

By Sumana Chatterjee
 Knight Ridder Newspapers (KRT)

WASHINGTON — In a significant win for Democrats, the Senate voted overwhelmingly Thursday to require all handguns sold in the United States to have child-safety locks.

The lopsided vote, 70-27, buoyed Democrats' hopes for adding further gun-control measures to a controversial bill that would give gun manufacturers immunity from some civil lawsuits. The National Rifle Association, the powerful pro-gun lobby, has pushed for the bill and President Bush has said he wants it passed without any changes.

But Democrats intend to force more votes over the next week on additional gun-control amendments, aimed at inspiring their political base for the election year. Specifically,

they'll press to extend a ban on assault weapons and to require background checks for buyers at gun shows.

The outcome on the key pending amendments is uncertain. The underlying gun-manufacturers' liability bill, however, is expected to pass with crossover support from Democrats. This legislation would protect gun manufacturers, as well as sellers of firearms and ammunitions, from civil liability for damages when someone misuses their products or commits a crime.

The measure faces wide opposition, including from some Republicans, the International Brotherhood of Police Officers and other law enforcement groups.

Bill sponsor Sen. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, said the legislation was written narrowly to ensure that the gun industry didn't face liability for illegal acts by a third party, such as a gun shop owner who intentionally flouted the law when selling weapons. Manufacturers shouldn't be held responsible for illegalities they can't control, he argued.

"Our courts are now threatened by the kind of lawsuits that are simply not necessary, but politically motivated," Craig said.

The gun industry faces about 30 lawsuits, many from local governments, over the cost of gun violence. State courts around the country have ruled that manufacturers can be held liable. In one suit brought against Beretta by Cincinnati, the Ohio Supreme Court said that the gun manufacturer could be held liable for its role in creating and facilitating a criminal gun market through its failure to use reasonable care in selling and distributing guns, said Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who opposes the bill.

Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, rejects such logic.

"Such lawsuits are not intended to find real fault," he said, "but to play on the emotions of a jury and drive the gun industry out of business."

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Questions: Donna Chittenden, 346-3044, Office of Resource Management

ATHLETICS

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"No, I think that there was a commitment that was retained to work within the NCAA," Hubin said, adding that the NCAA "is making significant progress in addressing this."

The Register-Guard reported Feb. 10 that Oregon has reached an agreement to play Illinois in December in Chicago. In exchange, Illinois is slated to be Oregon's opponent for the 2005-06 season's Papé Jam in Portland.

Assistant Athletics Director for Media Services Dave Williford declined to confirm that Oregon will play Illinois, saying the schedule had not been finalized.

However, Athletics Director Bill Moos said, "We've worked very hard to schedule intersectional games against Big Ten (Conference) teams, and Illinois is one of them."

Hubin said Illinois would be an "esteemed" opponent.

"We're very proud to play Big Ten (Conference) schools because they line up with the (Pacific-10 Conference) athletically, academically and in so many other ways," he said.

But for people such as Silva, "proud" doesn't come to mind when thinking about the game.

"We would prefer for the University

to rescind the contract (with Illinois), quietly," Silva said. "We don't want to make an issue. We all (have) better things to do."

Silva called Illinois' mascot, which the school has used since 1926, "the most egregious Native American mascot." Others say Oregon shouldn't play Illinois because its mascot is particularly offensive.

"It's about this University's commitment to diversity and honoring diversity," Silva said.

"It's about the University saying it honors people," journalism Professor Debra Merskin added.

Silva said he would like to avoid conflict with University administrators, but he is ready to confront them if the Illinois games proceed.

"I do anticipate activities in the activist community, and they could be pretty broad," he said. "I (have) a year to think about what to do about it."

Hubin said he is "very aware of the objections" raised by local mascot opponents, but Hubin said he believes the University is not the appropriate place to address the issue.

"The proper forum is the NCAA," Hubin said. "They're dealing with this on a national level."

The NCAA Minority Opportunities and Interest Committee, led by Chairman Eugene Marshall, Jr., is reviewing the use of American Indian mascots.

"The committee is in the process of

putting together a checkpoint list to send out to the ... colleges and universities that use Native American mascots to see if their mascot is offensive, not only to themselves, but to other colleges and universities and their communities," Marshall said.

Marshall, who is the athletics director at Ramapo College in New Jersey, said he expects schools to complete the survey and turn in the results to the committee by September. He said that while some people oppose the use of American Indian mascots and some support it, the committee is attempting to find a solution that is satisfactory for both.

"What we're trying to do is come to an agreement to respect each other's beliefs," Marshall said.

Frohnmayr is not on the committee but is aware of its work, Hubin said. He added that it is unrealistic to expect the University to push the issue while the NCAA is working on it.

"While the issue is being actively considered by the NCAA, I don't think a unilateral action on our part would be appropriate," Hubin said. "Because there is action on the national scene, that's where we believe it should be resolved."

Contact the campus/federal politics reporter at chuckslothower@dailyemerald.com.

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BOMB

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employee said.

Police later traced the call to the University Bookstore and obtained surveillance video footage of Evangelista talking on a pay phone at the time of the bomb threat.

The hoax resulted in the evacuation of several hundred people from the library, an hour-long closure and a sweep of the library by police.

Evangelista was arrested and charged with menacing, harassment and disorderly conduct at about 6

p.m. Wednesday, according to EPD records. He was released that night without being jailed.

Evangelista will be arraigned in Lane County Circuit Court March 10 at 8:30 a.m.

The charges of disorderly conduct and harassment are Class B misdemeanors, and the charge of menacing is a Class A misdemeanor.

Delf said it is unusual for police to catch a bomb threat suspect, especially when the suspect calls from a pay phone or a phone that doesn't belong to an individual.

— Jared Paben

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