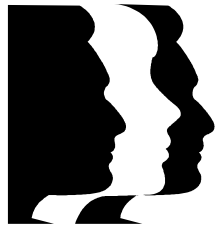


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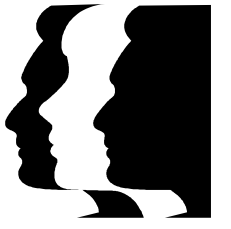


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Ammunition Accountability Act

Legislation requiring a statewide database to track coded ammunition

By Tonya Sprague

For many years politicians have been talking about gun control, which has proved unpopular with voters, but recently there has been a change in tactics, they have been talking about bullet control. Since it is estimated that there are approximately 10 billion bullets sold annually in the United States, and 20-30 billion bullets sold worldwide annually, it seems logical to

talk about bullet control as a way of controlling gun possession and use. Guns are of little use without bullets.

In Tennessee, HB3245, was filed for introduction to the House by Rep. Larry J. Miller (D-Memphis) and SB3395, filed for introduction to the Senate by Sen. Reginald Tate (D-Memphis) on January 17, 2008. If passed, it would amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 39 (Criminal Of-

fenses), Chapter 17 (Offenses Against Public Health, Safety, and Welfare), Part 13 (Weapons). Also known as ammunition coding system (ACS), bullet coding, bullet fingerprinting, and serializing bullets. This bill, with similar bills being introduced in states across the nation, requires that all handgun and assault weapon ammunition manufactured or sold in the state of Tennessee, on or after January 1, 2009, have an identifying

code etched into the base of each bullet projectile, allowing law enforcement officers to trace bullets recovered at crime scenes back to the point of sale. If the bills become law, where would that leave all of the uncoded ammunition? The bill also requires by January 1, 2011, all non-coded ammunition for the caliber's listed in this bill, whether owned by private citizens or retail outlets, be disposed of.

To enforce the AA Act in Tennessee, the TBI would maintain a database on the coded bullets which would contain the following: a manufacturer registry requiring manufacturers to register with the TBI and maintain for seven years records concerning all sales, loans, and transfers of ammunition to, from, or within the state; and a vendor registry requiring vendors to register with the TBI and record the date of transaction, name of transferee, purchaser's driver license number or other government issued ID card number, date of birth of the purchaser, unique identifier number of all handgun ammunition or bullets transferred, and all other information prescribed by the TBI. The proposed act requires that the vendor must retain records for three years from the date of a recorded purchase.

The need for bullet control is said to be an effort to keep up with the growing demand for better crime fighting tools. Individual bullet identification could provide law enforcement a valuable tool to expedite their investigations. Pro gun groups see it as another form of gun control.

On December 15, 1791 Virginia ratified the Bill of Rights, and the first ten amendments became part of the United States Constitution. Among them, the second amendment seems to be one of the most controversial. It states: *A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.* In the over two hundred years since it was drafted, one of the first things noticeable about our Constitution is how much attention it devotes to the legislative branch of the federal government. There are over 100 bills pending in the legislature that deal with guns in one way or another, including some bills that were carried over from last year. It is only the beginning of 2008 and already new measures which haven't come up for a committee vote yet are being introduced for the first time. Among these is the Ammunition Accountability Act, AA.

Costs of implementing the plan would be funded by means of an end-user fee of a half-cent tax on each bullet sold in the state. This bill also creates the "coded ammunition fund" for deposit of the end-user fee.

The concept of "fingerprinting bullets" is not new. In fact a recommendation came in 1935 during hearings on proposed handgun legislation in the US Senate. A man named Hector Pocaroba suggested placing serial numbers inscribed upon small metal tape inside every bullet manufactured in the United States. The idea back then, was the same as now; to identify the person firing a crime bullet. Unlike ballistic fingerprinting, ACS technology doesn't require any special training or equipment for law enforcement to use other than very good eyesight or a really good magnifying glass.



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