



UNITED STATES SENATOR ★ SERVING THE CITIZENS OF IDAHO

LARRY CRAIG

[HTTP://CRAIG.SENATE.GOV/PRESS/](http://craig.senate.gov/press/)

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
September 19, 2008

Susan Irby (202) 224-8078
Will Hart (208) 342-7985

Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty **by Senator Larry Craig**

When I joined freedom-loving Idahoans back in June to celebrate the Supreme Court's landmark *Heller* decision, striking down the Washington, D.C. handgun ban, I urged vigilance in safeguarding our Second Amendment rights. I knew there would be attempts by those opposed to the constitutional right to bear arms, to test the lines drawn by the Court.

Three months later, that opposition is in full thrall. The District predictably reacted with defiance, and its officials publicly plotted to block their citizens' access to firearms.

The House of Representatives called their bluff this week and passed legislation to roll back anti-gun laws in the District of Columbia. Liberals' attempts to limit that bill by putting obstructing conditions on gun ownership failed on a nearly two-to-one vote, and the House ultimately passed the gun rights bill by a convincing 266-152 vote. That bill, H.R.6842, awaits Senate consideration, and the president has said he will sign it into law if the bill reaches his desk.

I have joined other pro-gun Senators to urge Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada to bring this bill to a vote before Congress adjourns for the year. Gun control advocates meanwhile are lobbying their Senate friends to filibuster and run out the clock.

A similar fight is underway on another front: correcting conflicting federal regulations on carrying firearms on federal lands.

Those legally allowed to carry a gun generally can in areas administered by the Bureau of Land Management or the U.S. Forest Service. But if these folks are on lands administered by the National Park Service (NPS) or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), their firearms must be inaccessible – and sometimes even inoperable or cased.

Last year, more than half the Senate from both political parties signed letters authored by my Idaho colleague Mike Crapo, urging Department of Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne to correct this problem. The Interior Department began the long process of changing its regulations by publishing a proposed rule and asking for public comments, which are now being reviewed.

[MORE]

Craig page 2 – Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty

Efforts also are underway to make this change via federal statute, so that it remains in effect past the Bush Administration. I am cosponsoring S.2619, introduced by Senator Tom Coburn of Oklahoma, broadly protecting law-abiding citizens from losing their gun rights through Interior regulations in parks and refuges. On Thursday, September 11, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, on which I serve, overwhelmingly passed an amended version of this legislation. This bill would allow individuals not prohibited from having firearms, to carry them on NPS and USFWS lands if the State where the lands are located has comparable rules for its own State parks. I hope the House and Senate can agree on this bill in final form and send it to the president soon, but that will also depend on overcoming procedural obstacles created by the bill's opponents before the end of the legislative session.

The enemies of the Second Amendment haven't changed their minds – just their tactics. With the limited time remaining for this Congress and the Bush Administration, they may be able to accomplish their goals just by delaying action. It's worth remembering that even passive resistance, under these circumstances, can threaten liberty. As long as I serve in the U.S. Senate, I will be fighting for our right to keep and bear arms.