

## Sensible Gun Laws

Vermont has one of the lowest homicide rates in the United States. During my eleven years as Governor, the highest number of murders in a single year was 25 and the lowest number was five. Over half of these were domestic assaults, and the majority were not committed with a firearm.

If you say “gun control” in Vermont or Wyoming, people think it means taking away their hunting rifle. If you say “gun control” in New York City or Los Angeles, people are relieved at the prospect of having Uzis or illegal handguns taken off the streets. They’re both right. That’s why I think Vermont ought to be able to have a different set of laws than California.

I believe the federal gun laws we have—like the Brady Bill—are important, and I would veto any attempt to repeal or gut them. The Assault Weapons Ban expires next year, and it should be renewed. Although President Bush has claimed he supports renewing it, he is talking out both sides of his mouth; his staff has signaled that he doesn’t want or expect Congress to renew the ban, and that is wrong.

I don’t think we need a lot of new federal laws. But we do need to do a few things at the federal level, like requiring Insta-Check on all retail and gun show sales. We also must do a better job of enforcing the laws on the books. President Bush promised to be tough in enforcing gun laws, but his Administration has prosecuted only about 2% of all gun crimes and they are virtually ignoring 20 of the 22 major federal gun laws on the books. That is an abysmal record and as President, I’d make tough enforcement a reality, not just political rhetoric.

After that, I would let the states decide for themselves what, if any, additional gun safety laws they want. Just as we resist attempts by President Bush to dictate to the states how we run our school systems and what kind of welfare programs to have, we need to resist attempts to tell states how to deal with guns beyond existing federal law and fixing a few loopholes and problems.