

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR JIM FLORIO
ASSAULT WEAPONS PRESS CONFERENCE
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY
MONDAY, MARCH 19, 1990

LET ME THANK THE SHERIFF AND ALL THE DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC OFFICIALS WHO ARE HERE. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE PEOPLE WHO STAND BEHIND ME WHO REALLY DO CONSTITUTE THAT "THIN BLUE LINE" THAT WE TALK ABOUT QUITE A BIT. THAT'S THE "THIN BLUE LINE" THAT SEPARATES CIVILIZATION FROM THE FORCES OF CRIMINALITY. THEY REPRESENT THE MOST SOLID LINE OF DEFENSE FOR OUR STATE AND FOR OUR COMMUNITIES, EVEN FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOODS.

THAT LINE OF DEFENSE THAT WE HAVE AGAINST CRIME. THEY'RE ARE CONFRONTING ON A DAILY BASIS CRIMINALS ARMED WITH WEAPONS THAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HERE TODAY. THESE WEAPONS OF DEVASTATING FIREPOWER. GUNS THAT CAN FIRE 30 BULLETS IN FIVE SECONDS.

THEY'RE CALLED ASSAULT WEAPONS. THEY WERE DESIGNED FOR ONE PURPOSE AND ONE PURPOSE ONLY. TO KILL THE MOST PEOPLE POSSIBLE IN THE SHORTEST AMOUNT OF TIME. THESE ARE TRULY WEAPONS OF WAR.

THEY MIGHT BELONG ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE, BUT THEY DON'T BELONG HERE IN NEW JERSEY.

I PROMISED IN MY CAMPAIGN THAT I WOULD WORK TO OUTLAW THESE WEAPONS. THAT'S WHY I GOT BEHIND LEGISLATION THAT WAS CHAMPIONED BY THE LATE SENATOR FRANK GRAVES OF PASSAIC COUNTY. POLICE OFFICIALS HERE KNOW THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE BEST FRIENDS THAT POLICE OFFICIALS AND THE PEOPLE IN BLUE EVER HAD. HE WANTED THESE WEAPONS BANNED. SO I'M GOING TO KEEP MY PROMISE TO THE PEOPLE OF NEW JERSEY -- AND TO FRANK GRAVES -- AND TAKE THESE WEAPONS OFF THE STREETS OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

ASSAULT WEAPONS ARE THE WEAPONS OF CHOICE OF DRUG DEALERS. AND IF THERE IS ONE LESSON THE POLICE HAVE LEARNED -- IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS OUR COUNTRY AND IN OUR STATE -- IT'S THAT THE DRUG DEALERS ARE NOT AFRAID TO USE THESE WEAPONS.

IN SOME AREAS, THEY'VE TURNED NEIGHBORHOODS INTO BATTLE ZONES. THEY'RE OUT-GUNNING THE POLICE. INNOCENT PEOPLE, INCLUDING CHILDREN, ARE BEING MOWED DOWN IN THE CROSSFIRE BETWEEN RIVAL GANGS AND GANGSTERS AND POLICE.

THAT'S NOT ACCEPTABLE IN NEW JERSEY AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED. PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE AND THE RIGHT TO BE SECURE. WITHOUT THOSE RIGHTS, NOTHING ELSE IS REALLY THAT SIGNIFICANT.

AND DESPITE THE STATISTICS. DESPITE THE APPEALS FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. DESPITE THE POLLS THAT SAY THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF AMERICANS WANT TO SEE ASSAULT

WEAPONS BANNED. THERE ARE THOSE WHO STAND AGAINST THE GRAVES BILL AND WHAT IT IS THAT IT REPRESENTS. I READ A NEWSPAPER STORY LAST WEEKEND, WHERE ONE OPPONENT OF OUR BILL DEFENDED THESE WEAPONS, SAYING, AND THIS IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, BUT HE SAID THAT THESE WEAPONS WERE "FUN GUNS."

FUN GUNS IS THE WAY THEY WERE DESCRIBED.

I WOULD ASK YOU TO ASK THESE PEOPLE WHO PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE EVERY DAY OF THEIR LIVES, WHETHER THESE THINGS ARE "FUN GUNS."

ASK THE PARENTS OF THE CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN LITERALLY MOWED DOWN WHETHER THESE THINGS ARE "FUN GUNS."

GO ASK NEW JERSEY STATE TROOPER ANTHONY DISALVATORE -- WHO I WAS WITH ABOUT TWO OR THREE WEEKS AGO, HE WAS WELCOMED BACK TO ACTIVE DUTY AFTER LAST AUGUST BEING SHOT DOWN ON THE JERSEY TURNPIKE DOWN IN SOUTH JERSEY AND WHO MIRACULOUSLY LIVED -- IF HE THINKS THE ASSAULT WEAPONS RECOVERED FROM THE MEN WHO SHOT HIM DOWN ARE "FUN GUNS."

I THINK THAT ANYBODY WHO IS MINIMALLY SENSIBLE WILL TELL YOU THESE ARE NOT "FUN GUNS."

HUNTERS DON'T NEED UZIS TO SHRED DEER. LAW ABIDING CITIZENS DON'T NEED "STREET SWEEPERS" TO CARRY OUT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES. BUT CRIMINALS WANT THESE GUNS, AND THEY'RE GETTING THEM. LEGALLY. THAT'S THE TRAGEDY OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM.

THAT'S GOT TO STOP. AND UNDER OUR LEGISLATION IT IS GOING TO STOP.

NEW JERSEY HAS SOME OF THE TOUGHEST LAWS DESIGNED TO PROTECT US FROM POLLUTERS, SOME OF THE TOUGHEST LAWS TO PROTECT US FROM DRUNK DRIVERS, SOME OF THE TOUGHEST LAWS TO ALLOW US TO SCREEN BEFORE PEOPLE GET HAND GUNS, A SEVEN DAY WAITING PERIOD. NOW WE'RE GOING TO HAVE THE TOUGHEST STATE LAW ON ASSAULT WEAPONS, TOO.

WE ARE NOT BANNING ALL SEMI-AUTOMATIC RIFLES AND HANDGUNS, AND SHOTGUNS AND LONG GUNS. WE'RE ONLY TARGETING A FEW OF THE MOST OFFENSIVE WEAPONS. WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF INFRINGING ON THE LEGITIMATE INTERESTS OF SPORTSMEN AND HUNTERS. THAT'S NOT WHAT WE'RE ABOUT. BUT WE ARE GOING TO BAN WEAPONS THAT HAVE NO LEGITIMATE USE FOR ANYONE BUT SOLDIERS IN COMBAT.

COMMON SENSE HAS TO PREVAIL. AND COMMON SENSE TELLS US THAT WE HAVE TO ACT AND WE HAVE TO ACT NOW. WE HAVE TO STAND UP FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO MAKE UP THAT "THIN BLUE LINE." WHEN THEY PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE EVERY DAY FOR US EVERY DAY, THAT'S THE LEAST WE CAN DO IN THIS VERY IMPORTANT AREA OF PROVIDING SAFE COMMUNITIES TO ALL OF THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY.

EVEN THE SUPERPOWERS HAVE SEEN THE FOLLY OF THE CONTINUATION OF AN ARMS RACE. NOW IT'S OUR TURN. IT'S OUR TURN BECAUSE WE'RE GOING TO END THE ASSAULT WEAPONS RACE HERE IN NEW JERSEY. WE'RE GOING TO WORK TO MAKE OUR STATE AND OUR STREETS SAFER. AND I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER WAY OF DOING BOTH THAN BY TAKING THE ASSAULT WEAPONS OUT OF CIRCULATION.

SO LADIES AND GENTLEMEN JUST LET ME CONCLUDE BY ASKING YOU AS CITIZENS, AND PARTICULARLY FOR THE MEDIA'S ASSISTANCE IN CARRYING THIS MESSAGE OUT TO THE SEVEN AND A HALF MILLION PEOPLE OF THIS STATE, TO WEIGH INTO THE PROCESS.

IF, AS I KNOW IS THE CASE, THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE IN THIS STATE KNOW THE WISDOM OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT HERE TODAY. CERTAINLY PEOPLE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT KNOW THE WISDOM OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT HERE TODAY. IT'S TIME NOW TO TAKE THAT WISDOM, TRANSLATE IT INTO THE POLITICAL PROCESS DOWN IN THE HALLS OF THE LEGISLATURE. AND MAKE SURE THAT THE GOOD LEGISLATORS, LIKE MIKE ADUBATO AND THE OTHERS WHO ARE ON THE FRONT LINE, GET SOME ASSISTANCE.

I WOULD ASK ALL WHO ARE IN THE SOUND OF MY VOICE, DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY THROUGH THE MEDIA, TO WEIGH IN. AND DO IT NOT JUST FOR SOME ABSTRACT SENSE OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST. NOT JUST FOR THE PEOPLE WHO ARE HERE IN LAW ENFORCEMENT. BUT DO IT FOR YOUR OWN FAMILIES. BECAUSE IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT IS REMOVED FROM YOUR OWN FAMILY'S WELL-BEING.

IF PEOPLE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT DRUG TRAFFICKING IN THIS STATE THEN HELP US DEAL WITH THE DRUG TRAFFICKING PROBLEM BY TAKING THE WEAPONS OF CHOICE OUT OF THE HANDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKERS. THIS TRULY IS SOMETHING THAT IS EVERYONE'S INTEREST TO DO. AND I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR CONSIDERATION AND SUPPORT AND THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING OUT TODAY.