

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR JIM FLORIO
ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN LEGISLATION
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY
FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 1990

LET ME THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING TO WHAT I REGARD AS A VERY IMPORTANT EVENT. LET ME INTRODUCE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE HERE WITH ME, SENATOR JOHN RUSSO, ASSEMBLYMAN MECCA THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND PETER HARVEY, WHO IS A SPECIAL ASSISTANT WHO HAS BEEN HELPING THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ON THIS MATTER. LET ME ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRESENCE OF OUR SUPERINTENDENT OF STATE POLICE, JUSTIN DINTINO.

A LITTLE MORE THAN A WEEK AND A HALF AGO, IN MY OFFICE I MET WITH STEVE PERSKIE AND SENATOR GRAVES. WE HAD A GOOD MEETING AND WE PLANNED HOW WE WERE GOING TO LAUNCH THIS INITIATIVE AND CARRY THROUGH, IN A VERY RAPID PERIOD OF TIME, TO COMPLETION THIS LEGISLATION THAT WOULD BAN ASSAULT WEAPONS IN THIS STATE AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE.

THIS WEDNESDAY, THAT IS TWO DAYS AGO, IN PATERSON, NEW JERSEY WE HAD PLANNED TO HAVE AN EVENT AT WHICH TIME WE WOULD SPECIFY HOW IT IS WE WERE GOING TO DO THAT. ASSEMBLYMAN MECCA, SENATOR GRAVES AND MYSELF HAD THAT PLANNED. AND, OF COURSE, IN THE INTERIM, SENATOR GRAVES HAS PASSED AWAY.

WHAT WE ARE DOING TODAY IS STATING THAT WE ARE GOING TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THAT COMMITMENT. WE'RE GOING TO PASS THIS LEGISLATION BECAUSE IT'S IMPORTANT TO PASS -- LONG OVERDUE. AND WE'RE GOING TO DO IT, IN RECOGNITION OF THE HARD WORK THAT SENATOR GRAVES PUT FORWARD TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE WOULD BE SAFE IN NEW JERSEY. I CAN THINK OF NO GREATER TRIBUTE THAT WE COULD PAY TO HIM THAN TO MAKE SURE THAT WE FOLLOW UP ON WHAT WAS VIRTUALLY ONE OF HIS LAST PROJECT COMMITMENTS.

AND I'M PLEASED THAT SENATOR RUSSO HAS CHOSEN TO PICK UP THE MANTLE OF PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS BY BEING THE LEAD SENATE SPONSOR OF THIS LEGISLATION. HE IS GOING TO JOIN WITH ASSEMBLYMAN MECCA TO MAKE SURE THAT WE DO THIS AND DO IT VERY QUICKLY.

IT'S IRONIC THAT AS THE ARMS RACE IS SLOWING DOWN IN THE WORLD BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION, WE HAVE ANOTHER ARMS RACE THAT IS LITERALLY ALMOST OUT OF CONTROL IN THIS COUNTRY AND HERE IN NEW JERSEY. I'M TALKING ABOUT THE ARMS RACE IN ASSAULT WEAPONS. THE ONE THAT'S GOING ON IN NEIGHBORHOODS HERE IN NEW JERSEY AND ACROSS THE NATION.

DRUG DEALERS ARE TURNING OUR STREETS INTO BATTLE ZONES. THEY'RE USING SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS LIKE MAC-10 PISTOLS AND SOME OF THE OTHER WEAPONS THAT YOU SEE HERE. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THE COLONEL AND I WENT TO A DINNER ABOUT A WEEK AGO WHEN THE STATE POLICE WELCOMED BACK INTO THEIR RANKS FOR ACTIVE DUTY A TROOPER, ANTHONY DISALVATORE, WHO SOME OF YOU MAY REMEMBER

WAS ALMOST KILLED LAST AUGUST WHEN HE STOPPED A CAR AND WAS SHOT. ONE OF THE WEAPONS IN THE CAR THAT WAS ULTIMATELY CAPTURED WAS A MAC-10. SO THIS IS NOT AN ACADEMIC OCCURRENCE. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT REAL LIVE PROBLEMS THAT ARE OUT ON THE ROADS AND THE HIGHWAYS NOW THAT JEOPARDIZE THE LIVES OF, NOT ONLY OUR POLICE, BUT JEOPARDIZE THE LIVES OF ALL OF OUR CITIZENS. BECAUSE DRUG DEALERS, PARTICULARLY, ARE LITERALLY IN A POSITION TO OUT-GUN OUR POLICE AND MOW DOWN INNOCENT PEOPLE. THAT'S UNACCEPTABLE AND IT HAS TO END NOT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE, NOT NEXT YEAR, BUT NOW. AND THAT'S WHAT WE'RE COMMITTING OURSELVES TO DO.

OUR FAMILIES HAVE A RIGHT TO BE SAFE BECAUSE WITHOUT THAT RIGHT, NO OTHER RIGHT IS MEANINGFUL.

IN THE CAMPAIGN I PROMISED TO WORK VERY HARD TO BAN ASSAULT WEAPONS. I'M GOING TO KEEP THAT PROMISE AND WE'RE GOING TO KEEP IT FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE -- AND FOR FRANK GRAVES.

MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, THE BILLS ARE TOUGH. THEY'RE AS TOUGH AS FRANK GRAVES WAS. AND THEY'RE TOUGHER THAN THE CRIMINALS WHO USE THESE WEAPONS.

NEW JERSEY HAS SOME OF THE TOUGHEST LAWS ON THE BOOKS IN REGARD TO ACTIONS AGAINST POLLUTERS. WE HAVE SOME OF THE TOUGHEST LAWS ON THE BOOKS WITH REGARD TO WAITING PERIODS FOR HANDGUN PURCHASES.

NOW WE'LL HAVE THE TOUGHEST LAWS ON ASSAULT WEAPONS.

WHAT WE PROPOSE WON'T INFRINGE ON THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF SPORTSMEN AND GUN COLLECTORS. BUT WE ARE GOING TO BAN THESE WEAPONS. SPORTSMEN HAVE NO USE FOR THESE THINGS.

EVERYTHING YOU SEE HERE ON THIS TABLE CAN BE PURCHASED LEGALLY IN THE STATE TODAY.

THE LEGISLATION BEING PUT FORWARD CLEARLY LISTS WHAT WE MEAN BY "ASSAULT WEAPONS." AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL WILL HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO PERIODICALLY REVIEW AND UPDATE THAT LIST SO WE CAN KEEP UP WITH THE TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS THAT THE UNDERWORLD IS CAPABLE OF PUTTING INTO THE STREAM OF COMMERCE.

COMMON SENSE IS GOING TO START DICTATING POLICY. HUNTERS DON'T NEED UZIS TO GO OUT INTO THE WOODS. LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS DON'T NEED "STREET SWEEPERS." CRIMINALS DO.

COMMON SENSE IS WHAT LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ACROSS THIS COUNTRY HAVE DEMONSTRATED. AND THEY HAVE ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION SPELLED OUT THEIR VIEW THEY WANT THESE WEAPONS OUTLAWED. WITH YOUR HELP AND THE HELP OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF GOOD SENSIBLE PEOPLE IN THIS STATE, THIS LEGISLATION WILL BE PASSED SOONER RATHER THAN LATER. AND TO THAT END I THINK WE CAN PAY A GREAT TRIBUTE TO FRANK GRAVES, AND WE'RE COMMITTED TO DO THAT.