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United States Senate

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Committees:

Budget
Commerce, Science
& Transportation
Energy & Natural Resources
Environment & Public Works
Select Committee on
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Special Committee on Aging

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~~Dear _____~~

Thank you for writing me regarding S.1431, a bill to reauthorize the assault weapons ban. I appreciate hearing from you.

As you may know, S. 1431 was introduced by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), on July 17, 2003. This bill is intended to reauthorize the assault weapons ban that is set to expire on September 13, 2004. Currently, this bill is in the Senate Committee on the Judiciary.

I am not convinced that allowing the Assault Weapons Ban and Law Enforcement Protection Act of 2003 ban to expire would increase public safety. Semiautomatic assault weapons are one of the most menacing weapons, and to allow the reintroduction of a weapon intended for light infantry after a ten-year ban would not increase the safety of Oregonians. In fact, the evidence suggests that it would decrease public safety. In enacting the original bill, the House Report on the ban voted that "evidence continues to mount that these semiautomatic assault weapons are the weapons of choice among drug dealers, criminal gangs, hate groups, and mentally deranged persons bent on mass murder." The House Report also noted testimony from the Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms "that the percentage of semiautomatic assault weapons among guns traced because of their use in crimes" increased from 5.9 percent in 1990 to 8.1 percent in 1993.

Again, thank you for keeping me apprised of your views. If I can be of further assistance to you on this or other issues, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



RON WYDEN
United States Senator

RW/mab