

Gun bill: One law vs. home rule

By Tim Richard
staff writer

To some it's a gun issue.
To others it's a home rule principle.
A state Senate bill would prevent local governments from passing ordinances banning pistols.

Passed by the Senate last June, SB 478 was stymied Tuesday when the House adjourned until Dec. 9 without acting on it.

"I understand 85 percent of the House received contributions from the National Rifle Association," said a chief opponent, Rep. Judith Miller, R-Birmingham. "You can draw your own conclusions on whether it will pass."

MILLER JOINED Rep. Perry Bullard, D-Ann Arbor, recently in opposing the measure on a 5-2 vote

when it was reported out of the House Towns and Counties Committee.

Asked how he thought it would fare in the full House, Bullard said, "All too well, I'm afraid."

As home-rule city advocates see it, the bill steps on the toes of cities trying to attack what they see as a pernicious crime problem.

"There's a broader public policy question than gun control," said Miller. "Coming from my background (Birmingham City Commission) in the local home rule, it's ludicrous to hear legislators raise holy hell on the Detroit equity package (state funding for various institutions) and say, 'Why can't they solve it themselves?'"

"Then they turn around and support this. Detroit's trying to deal with its crime problem. Why cut 'em off at the pass?"

Miller also was impressed by testimony from George Ward, chief assistant Wayne County prosecutor, that 50 percent of the defendants prosecuted for illegal possession of firearms are not sentenced — at the discretion of the judge.

Bullard, who comes from the left side of the political spectrum, was rebuffed when the committee rejected his amendment to allow cities of more than 100,000 population to have pistol ordinances. It would have applied to cities the size of Detroit, Livonia, Warren, Grand Rapids, Flint and Ann Arbor.

THE NATIONAL Rifle Association lobbyist, Charles Cunningham, said NRA would support a uniform state law.

As reported to the House floor, the measure would:

• Prohibit local governments from passing "any ordinance or regulation pertaining to . . . the ownership, regulation, purchase, sale, transfer, transportation, carrying or

possession of pistols or other firearms . . ."

• Allow local units to regulate use of firearms by prohibiting firing of a gun within city limits.

• Allow cities to impose stiffer fines for violations of existing state gun laws. This amendment would preserve Detroit's ability to enact a proposed 30-day minimum sentence for individuals convicted of carrying a concealed weapon. The Senate would have to concur if the full House adopts the amended version.

BUT TO REP. David Hongman, R-West Bloomfield, the issue is uniformity of the law.

"I will support it," said the freshman lawmaker, an attorney. "I personally do not think it is a good idea to bar ownership of guns by law-abiding private citizens. Criminals are always going to have guns."

"We don't want a patchwork of laws across the state. A person could go across all sorts of jurisdictions

National honor for Reickel



Rep. Judith Miller
home rule question

Wayne County parks director R. Eric Reickel has been inducted into the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.

Reickel, who directed the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Department until 1983, received the honor at the annual meeting of the National Recreation and Park Association, in Anaheim, Calif.

To qualify as a fellow in the academy, the member must serve in a high level of park and recreation administration for not less than 15 years, demonstrate outstanding ability in administration and assume leadership in the profession, and express a desire to contribute to the advancement of parks and recreation.

Membership is limited to 100 professionals and recreation educators throughout the country.

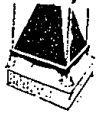
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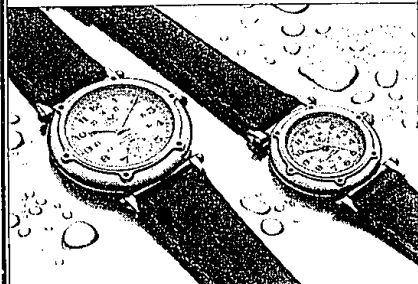
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