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SOURCES OF PUBLIC PRESSURE.

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Chapter I  
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to perform a case study identifying the sources of public pressure, recording the specific views held by the various sources, and determining the sources that most influenced a certain United States Congressman concerning a controversial piece of legislation. With regard to gun-control legislation presented in Congress during 1968, this study attempts to establish that Congressman Herman T. Schneebeli, representing the Seventeenth District of Pennsylvania, was primarily influenced by a single organized interest, the National Rifle Association, that utilized a write-in campaign to promote their opinion.

Before identifying the specific methodology used to accomplish the stated purpose, the reasons for choosing gun-control legislation must first be made clear. The fundamental reason for choosing legislation introduced on gun control mainly in the House of Representatives during the Ninetieth Congress from April to November of 1968 was that Congressional offices were literally avalanched with mail concerning this legislation during the summer of 1968, indicating an acute public interest on the issue. Further, this legislation was selected because, according to Congressman Schneebeli, this legislation has been the subject of more intense constituent interest than any other issue *while* he has been in office. The period from April to November was chosen because it

represents the dates in which all the major bills in this field that study found contain trails that indicate a certain public were decided upon in the Ninetieth Congress. Finally, the above information of the legislative process. Such background data of the mentioned period and the gun control legislation were chosen to provide a background against the constituent in the case study to take advantage of this writer's working in Congressman Schneebeli's office when much of the Congressman's and staff's time was concentrated on responding to constituent opinions about gun control legislation. Finally, included with the background legislation.

Thus, As a background step, an historical review of this legislation was accomplished by studying primary sources such as the original bills and secondary sources like the invaluable Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report. By completing this review of gun control legislation introduced in the Ninetieth Congress, *this writer attempts to develop* a clear understanding of why certain interest groups

favored specific amendments and bills that were proposed and why other groups simply favored or opposed all of the bills and amendments. Also, such a review will

The sources of public interest were grouped together to add to our understanding of the significance of Congressman Schneebeli's voting record on gun-control legislation. organized interest groups, and constituent interest as expressed

Also, as part of the background, an attempt was made to primarily in letters to the Congressman. By evaluating both primary and secondary sources of data, the stands of the various classes of the constituency of the Seventeenth District that demonstrates *its* strong interest in reference to gun control legislation were determined. For example, to decide the stand of the local newspapers in the Seventeenth District, this writer reviewed the number of registered resident hunters and registered voters and materials, letters-to-the-editors, and the features of five local

such secondary sources as the Pennsylvania Industrial Directory, this study found certain traits that indicate a strong public interest in the legislation. Such background data will better enable the reader to view the constituency in the same manner as the Congressman did while he contemplated the various public responses that could arise according to how he voted on the measures related to gun control. Finally, included with the background data is the voting record of Congressman Schneebeli on all amendments and bills pertaining to gun control and his analysis of why he voted as he did, determined through an interview with the Congressman. While in this interview, Representative Schneebeli indicates that his personal judgement was the sole criteria for deciding how to vote on the gun control measures, the case study is organized to report what sources did, indeed, influence this Congressman and, at the same time, divulge all the sources of public pressure, including those that had no influence on Mr. Schneebeli.

The sources of public interest were grouped together under four general headings: periodicals and newspapers, party pressure, organized interest groups, and constituent interest as expressed primarily in letters to the Congressman. By evaluating both primary and secondary sources of data, the stands of the various classes of interest in reference to gun control legislation were determined. For example, to decide the stand of the local newspapers in the Seventeenth District, this writer reviewed the editorials, letters-to-the-editors, and the features of five local

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newspapers. Also, in one case, this writer interviewed the executive editor and one columnist of one major local newspaper to fully understand the viewpoint of their newspaper on this issue.

After clearly establishing the viewpoints of all the major interests, the method of comparison was utilized to see which public interest or interests in their stand were most similar to the opinion reflected in Congressman Schneebeli's voting record. By this method of comparison, it is at least possible to recreate the same frame of reference that confronted the Congressman regarding gun control legislation and <sup>its</sup> further *possible to* ~~it~~ exists to indicate the source or sources that may have influenced his decisions on how to vote.

body

## Chapter II

### BACKGROUND

Charles L. Clapp, in The Congressman, emphasizes that congressmen are reluctant to decline to accept jurisdiction, particularly if voters of their district are involved, while at the same time, the serious substantive legislative problems with which they must concern themselves have become more numerous and complex, making evaluation more necessary and decision more difficult. Faced with such an impossible workload, many congressmen seek refuge in specialization, a tendency which is encouraged by the committee system. Such an emphasis simplifies greatly the task of the representative:

Colleagues turn to him for aid in determining their own position on legislative matters which arise within his field of competence; he, in turn, settles on one or two trusted members on each committee to whom he can turn for clarification or advice regarding proposals falling within their committee's jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup>

Although Charles Clapp recognizes that the most important single source of information in evaluating legislation is the opinion of the trusted colleagues, he also states that legislators may use many other sources in the course of their deliberations. Especially when a piece of legislation particularly involves the voters of a congressman's district, he is obligated to turn to sources outside of the legislative body for consultation. As pointed out by Charles Clapp, these sources may vary signifi-

cantly from issue to issue and from member to member, ". . . depending on the type of legislation involved, the experience and philosophy of the legislator, and the various groups in society." <sup>2</sup> Among the potential sources of information are individual colleagues, political party opinions, the news media, constituent mail, private research organizations, pressure groups, and floor debate. This study considers a piece of legislation which vitally involved the voters of a specific congressman's district and therefore, forced the congressman to turn to sources outside of the legislative body.

The legislation chosen for this purpose is the gun-control legislation introduced mainly in the House of Representatives during the Ninetieth Congress. The most recent efforts directed toward gun control in the United States were sparked by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on April 4, 1968. In the wake of King's murder, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved by a nine to seven vote, a gun control amendment to the Administration's Anti-crime Bill (HR 5037). This action represents the first time since 1938 that firearms legislation has been approved by a Congressional committee. Approval of the amendment, however, only came after the sponsors had deleted a controversial provision banning the mail-order sale of rifles and shotguns. As approved, the amendment prohibited the interstate shipment of handguns to individuals and the over-the-

counter sale of handguns to individuals who did not live in the dealer's state.

At the same time the Senate Judiciary Committee was having trouble adopting even a mild amendment; the Louis Harris survey was revealed that, although there were guns in fifty-four per cent of the nation's homes, Americans overwhelmingly supported tighter restrictions on gun ownership. The January 1968 Gallup Poll disclosed:

Seventy per cent of the persons in the survey believed laws concerning handguns should be more strict. Sixty-one per cent believed laws concerning rifles and shotguns should be more strict. Seventy-five per cent believed a person should not be able to send away for a gun through the mail. Finally, seventy-three per cent were for a law which would require registration of a rifle or shotgun and eighty-five per cent were for a law which would require the registration of a handgun.<sup>3</sup>

The April 23, 1968, Harris poll showed that public support for registration of all gun sales had risen to seventy-one per cent. The poll revealed that three out of every four Americans favored Federal legislation to control the sales of guns. Louis Harris reported that the latest results marked a five per cent rise in support of gun control legislation from last August. Mr. Harris added in his comments about the April 23 poll, "... such legislation has been before Congress for over a year, but the measure has encountered strong opposition from the National Rifle Association."<sup>4</sup> Significantly, while the N. R. A. continued its strong opposition, the Harris poll revealed that people

who own guns favor gun control by sixty-five to thirty-one per cent, better than a two to one margin.

Despite apparent public support for strict gun legislation, the Senate consistently hesitated to accept any firm amendments in May of 1968. On May 16, the Senate rejected a series of amendments to regulate rifles and shotguns. Also defeated were any attempts to substitute the weak gun control bill supported by the N. R. A. for the bill's strict controls over handguns. The result was to leave intact the provisions of the committee-approved bill, which prohibited the interstate mail-order sale of pistols and revolvers and banned their over-the-counter sale if the purchaser did not live in the dealer's state. The key administration amendment to prohibit the mail-order sale of rifles and shotguns (100.S917) was offered by Senator Edward Kennedy (D. Mass.). His amendment was given enthusiastic support by law enforcement officers and by Senators from urban areas but was vehemently opposed by the N. R. A. and its sportsmen members and by Senators from Southern and Western states.<sup>5</sup> The coalition of Southern and Western Senators led to the rejection of the amendment by a 29-53 roll call vote.

The month of June marked the efforts of the House of Representatives to pass gun control legislation. The House on June 6, by a 368-17 roll call vote, cleared for the President's signature the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of

1968 (HR 5037). The key House vote on the crime bill was taken June 5, about twelve hours after Senator Robert Kennedy was shot, when the House voted 60-318 against a move to send the bill to conference where it could have been modified. The House, then, voted to accept the bill as it had passed the Senate. As sent to President Johnson, it bore little resemblance to the legislation he originally proposed in early 1967.

In regard to gun control, the bill prohibited the interstate shipment to individuals of pistols and revolvers and the over-the-counter purchase of handguns by individuals who did not live in the dealer's state. The bill specifically exempted rifles and shotguns from any controls and marked a compromise between strict gun control advocates and those legislators who felt rifles and shotguns should be exempted from all controls:

The gun control provisions—Title Four of the bill—were the first such legislation to pass Congress since 1938. They were a distinct compromise between those who sought strict controls of rifles and shotguns as well as handguns and those who felt that rifles and shotguns should be exempted from all controls and that handguns should be subject to only weak regulations. The latter group had the strong lobbying support of the powerful National Rifle Association. 6

Presidential pressure for stronger laws on firearms control began on June 6, 1968, when the President delivered a letter to Congress on the issue and later read the letter over national television. In the letter, President Johnson stated that the dangers of mail-order murder must be eliminated. He recognized

that the Senate had passed a watered-down version of the gun control law that he had recommended and that the House had taken action on the Senate Bill. In calling the bill only a half-measure, the President observed that it covers adequately only transactions involving handguns and leaves the deadly commerce in lethal shotguns and rifles without effective control. After expressing his views on the recorded legislation, he recommended the adoption of three more measures in regard to gun control. First, he urged Congress to make it unlawful to sell rifles and shotguns by mail order. Secondly, he strongly recommended that Congress should make it unlawful to sell rifles and shotguns to persons who are too young to bear the "terrible responsibility" that is placed in the hands of a gun owner. Also, he urged Congress to adopt legislation that would make it unlawful to sell rifles and shotguns in one state to residents of another. The President added that such legislation would not prevent legitimate hunters or sportsmen from purchasing firearms. His final statement indicated that he was aware of the public opinion polls favoring such legislation along with the concentrated effort of the National Rifle Association to prevent the same legislation. "The voices of the few must no longer prevail over the interests of the many. Let us now spell out our grief in constructive action."<sup>7</sup>

With Presidential pressure and the public reaction to the

assassination of Senator Robert Kennedy, Congress appeared to be moving toward passage of a strong gun control bill as key Senators who were expected to lead the opposition switched to support of the bill. According to the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, the changing fortunes of the measure apparently resulted from an outpouring of letters and telegrams in favor of the stronger controls. "Many Congressional offices revealed that they had been avalanched with mail insisting on the tougher controls in the two weeks since the assassination of Robert Kennedy." <sup>8</sup> The Senate Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee, June 18, approved prohibitions on the mail-order and out-of-state sale of rifles, shotguns and ammunition by a nine to zero vote and sent the Administration bill (S 3633) to full Judiciary Committee, which was scheduled to begin hearings June 27. On June 20, the House Judiciary Committee approved an identical bill (HR 17735) clearing it for floor action by a twenty-nine to six vote.

Among the Senate Subcommittee members who voted for the bill was Roman Hruska (R. Neb.), who has been the staunchest Senate supporter of the N. R. A.'s position against strict gun control regulations. According to Carl Bakal who has completed extensive research on the N. R. A., Senators Hruska, Sikes and Hickenlooper have introduced several gun control amendments which are written totally by the Association. <sup>9</sup> Yet, Senator

Hruska approved the bill in committee. The Senator reported ". . . public opinion had crystallized in favor of strong controls and it was reasonable for the Congress to review its efforts in the light of changing circumstances." <sup>10</sup> Support for strict gun control came from the U. S. Conference of Mayors, the Republican Governors Conference, three major gun and ammunition manufacturers, and the Emergency Committee for Gun Control which was formed by at least thirty national organizations interested in rigid gun controls.

The National Rifle Association continued to lead the opposition to strict controls. "On June 15, the N. R. A. mailed a two-page letter to its 900,000 plus members, urging them to write their Senators and Representatives to oppose additional gun laws." <sup>11</sup> Knowledge of this action by the N. R. A. is vital to this paper because approximately two weeks after the N. R. A. letter to its members, Congress was flooded with mail opposing rigid controls.

On June 24, President Johnson escalated the Administration's drive for stricter gun controls and asked Congress in a special message to require the national registration of every firearm and a license for every gun owner. With the intense effect of the Administration, the original Administration bill (S 3633 , HR 17735), which called for a ban on the mail-order and out-of-state purchases of rifles, shotguns, and the mail-order

sale of ammunition, appeared to be gaining momentum in Congress during the third week of June. However, by the end of the first week in July, ". . . fortunes appeared to be changing for proponents of strong new gun control legislation." 12

In early June, Congress was flooded with mail urging stricter gun laws. As a result, the original Administration bill banning mail-order and out-of-state sale of long guns and interstate shipment of ammunition was approved by a House Committee, and House floor action seemed likely before the July 4 recess. Likewise the Senate, which had rejected stringent gun regulations in May, appeared on the verge of a turnabout. However, in the last week of June and the first week of July, the mail changed significantly:

Partly as a result of a June 15 letter from the N. R. A. encouraging its members to write their Senators and Representatives to oppose gun legislation, and partly because the outrage following the Kennedy assassination has waned, many Members of Congress now report that their mail is against strong gun controls. 13

The House Rules Committee, which must clear the legislation before it ~~can~~ reach the floor, announced June 28 that it was postponing action until at least July 8. On the Senate side, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted on June 27 to postpone action until July 9.

Following extensive debate, the Senate Judiciary Committee adjourned on July 10 without approving a "watered-down" version

of the Administration's gun control legislation. The day before, the House Rules Committee approved HR 17735 by prohibiting the mail-order and out-of-state sale of rifles and shotguns and the interstate shipment of ammunition. Gun control proponents, however, had to pay a price for the Rules Committee approval. Representative Celler (D. N.Y.), Chairman of the Judiciary Committee and leader of the pro-gun control bloc, was forced to pledge that he would oppose any attempts to add registration and licensing amendments on the House floor. William McCulloch (Ohio), ranking Republican on the same committee, joined Celler in a vow to oppose gun registration and licensing, which the Administration supported.

Thus, after ~~the bill cleared the~~ Rules Committee, the House, July 24, passed and sent to the Senate the bill (HR 17735) banning mail-order and most out-of-state purchases of rifles and shotguns and prohibiting the interstate shipment of handgun ammunition. "Final passage came after four days of debate during which the House rejected amendments requiring federal registration of guns and licensing of gun owners and accepted several amendments easing some of the stricter restrictions." 14 Among the amendments accepted by the House, two were especially considered by proponents of strict gun control to weaken the bill substantially. The first was an amendment by Clark MacGregor (R. Minn.) which deleted all restrictions on the sale

of .22-caliber ammo and all ammo for rifles and shotguns. The MacGregor amendment was accepted by a narrow 218-205 roll call vote. The second was an amendment offered by Robert Sikes (D. Fla.) which permitted the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle and Practice to continue to furnish arms and ammunition to marksmanship clubs associated with the N. R. A. and to sell surplus arms at cost to N. R. A. members. This amendment was accepted by a 225-198 roll call vote. According to the ranking minority member of the Judiciary Committee, Mr. McCulloch, ". . . notwithstanding the large number of amendments adopted by the House, the basic thrust and effect of the Committee bill remains intact." 15

Finally, after a month long recess due to the National political party conventions, the Senate, September 12, began debate on The Gun Control Act of 1968. The Senate bill, as reported, did not require gun registration or owner licensing and resembled in major respects the long-gun control bill (HR 17735) passed July 24 by the House. After a week of debate and floor action, the Senate, September 18, passed by a 70 to 17 roll call vote and sent to conference with the House a bill (HR 17735) banning mail order and most out-of-state purchases of rifles, shotguns, handguns and ammunition. Final passage followed five days of debate during which the Senate four times rejected amendments which would have required some form of

**federal registration of guns and licensing of gun owners:**

Though slightly stronger than the bill passed by the House July 24, the Senate bill was nevertheless a disappointment to supporters of strong gun legislation . . . voting on the bill tended to divide along the same urban-rural lines that had formed in the House when it considered the bill. Senators representing rural states generally opposed amendments which might have limited access to or use of guns. 16

Prior to passage of HR 17735, the Senate substituted for the language of the House-passed bill the language of its own amended measure (S 3633). The major ways in which the Senate bill differed from the House-passed measure were three-fold. First of all, the Senate deleted House language which permitted interstate shipment of arms and ammunition to persons or organizations entitled to receive such material from the Secretary of the Army. Advocates of strong gun control legislation declared that this provision would exempt members of the National Rifle Association from the ban on interstate mail-order of firearms. Secondly, the Senate strengthened the controls over sale of ammunition expanding coverage to include rifle ammunition, .22 rimfire ammunition and shotgun shells which the House bill exempted. The wider coverage was preserved when the Senate, on a close roll-call vote (36-41), rejected a Committee amendment which would have provided for exemptions similar to those in the interstate mail-counter sale to a resident of a contiguous state unless a pre-sale affidavit procedure was complied with.

This review of gun control legislation shows that during Action on the Gun Control Act of 1968 (HR 17735) banning

mail-order and most out-of-state purchases of rifles, shotguns, handguns and ammunition was completed on October 10, 1968.

"Though the bill did not contain the registration and licensing provisions requested by the Administration, it was none the less a substantially stronger measure than had been considered possible at the beginning of the session." 17

House-Senate conferees completed action on HR 17735 October 8, and the Senate and the House agreed to their report by voice votes October 9 and October 10 respectively. The conferees accepted the Upper House's strong ammunition measures but allowed a modified version of the House language permitting interstate shipment of guns and ammunition to National Rifle Association members. An additional provision of the final bill required for both buyer and seller to comply with a pre-sale affidavit procedure in contiguous states over-the-counter sales and intrastate mail-order sales. Further provisions of the completed bill: required dealers to keep records of each sale; set twenty-one as the minimum age for purchase of a handgun or handgun ammunition and eighteen as the minimum age for purchase of long guns or ammunition for them; and prohibited firearms sale to convicted fugitives, felons, persons under indictment, unlawful users of drugs and mental defectives. December 16, 1968 was set as the effective date of the bill.

This review of gun control legislation shows that during

the consideration of the various bills and amendments there arose two factions within the Congress. There were those who sought strict controls of rifles and shotguns as well as handguns and, representing the other faction, those legislators who called for the exemption of rifles and shotguns from all controls and only weak regulations for handguns. Also, this review shows that in early June, Congress was flooded with mail urging strict gun laws while by the first week of July, the Congress was availed with mail calling for only weak regulation. Before determining the faction that Congressman Schneebeli most exemplified in his voting record and before observing his reaction to the trends of the mail on this issue, the next step is to briefly examine the political, economic, and social qualities of the constituency of the Seventeenth District which would indicate their strong interest in this legislation.

## II

Congressman Herman T. Schneebeli represents the Seventeenth District of Pennsylvania which includes Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and Union Counties. Also, a part of the Seventeenth District is that section of Dauphin County that is not included in the Sixteenth District, the city of Harrisburg. The single social factor that most indicates the constituency's strong interest in the field of gun control is their vital concern for hunting. <sup>18</sup> According to the figures of the Pennsylvania

Game Commission, there were 82,109 registered resident hunters within Congressman Schneebell's District in 1967. With the estimated population of this District to July of 1967 at 500,000, the number of registered hunters represents sixteen per cent of the total population of the District. Also, with the total number of resident hunters listed as 988,463 in Pennsylvania for 1967, the number in the Seventeenth District represents eight and a half per cent of the total. Such figures indicate that hunting is *an important* interest in the Congressman's District. As a group, hunters' concern for gun-control legislation, obviously, is that no pending legislation would deter the registered, law-abiding hunter from acquiring the necessary guns and ammunition to hunt the game of Pennsylvania nor cause any significant inconvenience to the sportsman-hunter of the state.

Another group interested in this legislation is the membership of the National Rifle Association which has consistently been the single organization that has most opposed all forms of gun-control legislation, both state and national. The National Rifle Association ". . . stands squarely on the premise that the ownership of firearms must not be denied American citizens of good repute so long as they use them for lawful purposes." <sup>19</sup> The objects and purposes of the organization have recently been revised:

To promote social welfare and public safety, law and order, and the national defense; to educate and

train citizens of good repute in the safe and efficient handling of small arms . . . ; and generally to encourage the lawful ownership and use of small arms by citizens of good repute. <sup>20</sup>

With such goals, the N. R. A. has never registered as a lobbying organization on the grounds that its functions are primarily educational and that its legislative activities are not a substantial portion of its total activities. However, the organization keeps a complete file, not only of federal laws affecting firearms but also of the laws of each state and many large cities. When gun-control legislation is introduced at any level, the N. R. A. immediately sends a two or four-page bulletin to its members in the area affected. The bulletin usually describes the proposal, gives the N. R. A. opinion of the effects it would have and lists the appropriate legislators and city officials whom the members are encouraged to write. "The standard boast of its officials is that the N. R. A. can flood Congress with more than 500,000 pieces of mail overnight in opposition to any federally proposed gun legislation." <sup>21</sup> What is the significance of this organization in the Seventeenth District of Pennsylvania?

After several unsuccessful efforts to acquire the membership distribution of the N. R. A. in the counties of this District, this writer used the influence of Congressman Schneebeli's office to obtain figures. His office replied that the N. R. A. would not give the figures for the District, since they insist

that they do not have such a breakdown, nor could they come up with one. The best that his office could secure was the total for the state of Pennsylvania - 58,530. Since the District has just under ten per cent of the state's hunters, this writer feels it would be safe to speculate that there could be at most ten per cent of the members of the state residing in the Seventeenth District or approximately 5,800 members. More important than their number, how vocal is the group? James R. Doran, Executive Editor of the Patriot-News Company which publishes The Evening News and The Patriot News in Harrisburg spoke about the voice of this organization in an interview with the writer. (The above mentioned newspapers have the largest daily circulation of the daily papers published in this District.) In explaining why he believed their editorials this past summer in favor of gun control represented the view of a majority of their subscribers although letters to the editor opposed strong legislation, he stressed that nearly all of the letters against control were written in a standard form which "merely repeated" established opinions of the N. R. A. "The National Rifle Association is a small, well-organized group which relies on letter writing to newspaper editors and legislators to combat all attempts for effective gun legislation," he said.<sup>22</sup> Then, he added that while all national opinion polls show that the majority of the citizens favor licensing of gun owners and

registration of all firearms, the vast majority of these citizens lack a vital enough interest to constantly remind their state and national representatives of their opinion. Thus, it would be easy for those representatives who rely on handwritten letters as a measure of testing constituent interest to mistake the opinion of an aroused and organized minority for the majority view. Thus, while the N. R. A. clearly represents an organization in this District vitally interested in the gun-control legislation of 1968, the degree of influence gained by this voiceful group must later be weighed against the degree to which they represent a constituency-held view concerning the legislation being reviewed.

Several economical and geographical factors at least indirectly demonstrate reasons for an interest in gun-control legislation among the constituency of the Seventeenth District. Lycoming County with a population of 109,367 in 1967 is a vital area to any person seeking election to Congress from the Seventeenth District.<sup>23</sup> This county, while representing the most populous county of the District also contains the most total area of all the counties in the state - 1,222 square miles. Also, this county contains the most forest area that is not claimed as state forest - over 550,200 acres. These figures indicate that most of the forest is owned privately and it seems proper to claim that much of this land is privately used for

hunting camps and cabins. With much of the land directly in the hands of the sportsmen of this area, the concern for gun-regulation laws is directly connected with the deep-rooted interest in property. Also related to the unique status of hunting in this District is the fact that two of the six state game farms are located within its boundaries. The Loyalsock Game Farm is located in R. D. 2, Montoursville and the State Wild Turkey Farm is located on Proctor Star Route near Williamsport.

In reviewing the findings of the Pennsylvania Industrial Directory, <sup>this writer found that</sup> the evidence indicates that the Seventeenth District is primarily a rural area lacking heavy industrial firms. According to the Industrial Directory, there are no industrial municipalities located in Montour, Snyder, Union and Northumberland Counties. Only the Williamsport area of Lycoming County and the Harrisburg area are listed as industrial municipalities within the Seventeenth District. <sup>24</sup> Also, as recorded for 1966, only two cities with a population over 40,000 exist in this area - Williamsport at 41,967 and Harrisburg at 76,697. The figures showing industrialization and city size indicate that, with one possible exception, the voters of the Seventeenth District are little interested in gun-control as it applies to the urban areas of the United States. Crime-control and riot-control as related to gun-control have little meaning in this District with the possible exception of Harrisburg's residents.

Voting registration figures indicate that Harrisburg may be without the political qualifications to be listed as a typical urban area. With 35,379 registered voters in the city of Harrisburg in 1966, 26,626 were listed as Republicans. This figure coincides with the voting registration figures for the remaining rural section of the District. The county figures are as follows: Lycoming, 29,502 Republicans and 21,623 Democrats; Montour, 3,914 Republicans and 3,187 Democrats; Northumberland, 31,070 Republicans and 21,016 Democrats; Snyder, 8,032 Republicans and 2,994 Democrats; Union, 7,761 Republicans and 2,892 Democrats. <sup>25</sup>

This section has indicated that the Seventeenth District is politically, economically, and socially representative of a rural area with a distinct interest in hunting. With such a background, the interest in gun-control legislation from a rural standpoint is significant within the District and one that must be considered when the Representative of the District reviews such legislation.

### III

The final preliminary step, the recording of Congressman Schneebeli's views on the issue, was attempted by reviewing his voting record on all related issues from April to November of 1968, and by revealing his ideas presented in an interview with

this writer. In respect to his voting record, the gun-control provisions of the Omnibus Crime Control Bill of 1968 (Title Four) were the first to pass Congress since 1938. These provisions were a distinct compromise between those who sought strict controls of rifles, shotguns and handguns and those who felt that rifles and shotguns should be exempted from all controls, the latter group having the support of the N. R. A.. Thus, before the bill was voted on in the House, all controversy was removed from the provisions.

Nevertheless, the Bill prohibited the interstate shipment to individuals of pistols and revolvers and the over-the-counter purchase of handguns by individuals who did not live in the dealer's state. Also, it specifically exempted rifles and shotguns from any controls. The House, June 6, by a 368-17 roll-call vote, cleared the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Street Act of 1968 and voted to accept the bill as it had passed the Senate. The vote came within forty-eight hours of the death of Senator Kennedy. Congressman Schneebeli voted "yea" which represented a vote for adoption of the Bill. This vote means little in determining where the Congressman stood on gun-control legislation since the controversy was previously removed from the Bill by a compromise and the Bill contained many different provisions on many varying issues.

The House, July 24, passed and sent to the Senate the

Gun-Control Act of 1968 (HR 17735) banning mail-order and most out-of-state purchases of rifles and shotguns and prohibiting the interstate shipment of handgun ammunition. Two key amendments were voted on by roll-call and from Congressman Schneebeli's vote on these amendments his view toward the legislation becomes more clear. The first, the MacGregor Amendment (150. HR 17735) exempted shotgun, rifle and .22 caliber rim-fire ammunition from restrictions on the sale of ammunition. The Bill, as proposed by President Johnson and reported by the Judiciary Committee, prohibited the sale of all handgun ammunition to persons under twenty-one and rifle and shotgun ammunition to persons under eighteen. The MacGregor amendment was accepted by a narrow 218-205 roll-call vote. Representative Celler, a strong gun-control advocate, stated ". . . the amendment would go a long way toward obstructing the purpose of the bill."<sup>26</sup> According to the D. S. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, a "nay" was a vote supporting strong gun-control as proposed by President Johnson.<sup>27</sup> The Republicans voted 116-70 in favor of the measure and the Democrats voted 102-135 in favor of the amendment. Congressman Schneebeli voted in favor of the measure along with the majority of his Republican colleagues. This amendment was designed to support the sportsmen hunters of America who rely on rifle, shotgun and .22 rim-fire ammunition in quest of the game in the nation. Congressman Schneebeli

demonstrated his recognition of the large hunting interest in the Seventeenth District by voting for the adoption of the MacGregor Amendment.

The second amendment which is pertinent in determining the Congressman's view on gun-control was offered by Robert L. F. Sikes (D. Fla.). The amendment (152. HR 17735) permitted the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle and Practice to continue to provide arms and ammunition to marksmanship clubs associated with the National Rifle Association and to sell surplus arms at cost to N. R. A. members. The amendment was accepted by a 225-198 roll-call vote with 114 Republicans and 111 Democrats supporting the proposal while it was opposed by 72 Republicans and 126 Democrats. In this case, a "yea" was a vote directly supporting the N. R. A. position according to the U.S. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report. However, Representative Schneebeli voted "nay" on this measure indicating that while recognizing the importance of the hunting interest in his District, he felt it unnecessary to place his vote in direct support of the N. R. A. 's position. He attempted to steer a middle course, not offending any "major" interest, while at the same time, maintaining his independence by not becoming allied with any "extreme" interest group that could potentially alienate some voters. Congressman Schneebeli voted for passage of the Gun-Control Act of 1968 (HR 17735) along with 147

Republicans and 158 Democrats while 39 Republicans and 79 Democrats opposed the measure.

In interviewing the Congressman, ~~this writer's~~ goal was to determine those organizations, newspapers and periodicals that influence his legislative decisions in general and more specifically, those that influenced his final judgements on gun-control legislation. In receiving a written response to a list of questions this writer personally delivered to the Congressman in January of 1969, Mr. Schneebeli listed Time, U. S. News, Newsweek, Christian Science Monitor, and the New York Times as national newspapers and periodicals he consistently reads and the Williamsport Sun-Gazette, Harrisburg Patriot and several of the smaller circulation newspapers including the Union County Journal of Milton as local newspapers he consistently reads. <sup>28</sup> However, he stated that "none" of these publications influenced his decision on how to vote on gun-control measures.

Attempting to determine the degree to which he depends on voters' opinions, this writer asked: "In general, how much do you depend on constituent views in voting on legislation?" His response was ". . . less than fifty-per cent influence." He added, however, ". . . specifically, the constituent views on gun legislation were more important than on most all other legislation." <sup>29</sup> Finally, endeavoring to determine the influence of the 4,000 plus letters he received on gun-control, this

writer asked: How were you influenced by the letters you received during the past summer months on gun-control and was the impact significant enough to alter your own views toward the bills offered this past summer? His answer was recorded as follows: "No, the letters did not alter my own views because most letters were opposed to registration and licensing. The constituency, as expressed in their letters, supported rather than altered my views."<sup>30</sup> In these responses, Congressman Schneebeli implies that he formulated his opinion before the letters began flowing into his office and he further implies that the letters he received were an accurate representation of the opinion held by the majority of voters in his District. Later study will evaluate these implications.

Also, in this interview, the Congressman revealed that he received no party pressure at any level concerning how to vote on gun-control legislation and further, he stated that the only means in which he was approached by an organized interest group on this issue was by "letter petition" from area sportsmen's groups. Therefore, in this interview, Congressman Schneebeli indicated that his personal judgement was the sole criteria for deciding how to vote on the controversial gun-control measures. The remainder of this study is dedicated to reporting what sources did, indeed, influence this Congressman while, at the same time, divulging all of the sources of public pressure,

including those that had no influence on Mr. Schneebeli.

NOTES

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2. Ibid., p. 126.
3. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., April 12, 1968), p. 805.
4. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Record, (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., vol. 114, No. 68, April 24, 1968), p. 54454.
5. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., May 24, 1968), p. 1189.
6. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., June 7, 1968), p. 1433.
7. Transcript, "Johnson Appeals to Congress for Strong Legislation on Firearms Control," New York Times, June 7, 1968, p. 23.
8. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., June 21, 1968), p. 1507.
9. Carl Bakal, The Right to Bear Arms, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), p. 256.
10. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, June 21, 1968, p. 1507.
11. Ibid., p. 1508.
12. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., July 5, 1968), p. 1646.
13. Ibid., p. 1647.

14. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., July 26, 1968), p. 1939.
15. Letter to Colleagues from William M. McCulloch, July 26, 1968.
16. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., September 20, 1968), p. 2459.
17. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Service, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., October 11, 1968), p. 2730.
18. According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the latest figures available on the number of registered resident hunters in Pennsylvania that includes a county breakdown are for 1967. Letter from Pennsylvania Game Commission, February 3, 1969.
19. Bakal, The Right To Bear Arms, p. 186.
20. Ibid., p. 193.
21. Ibid., p. 182.
22. Interview with Mr. James R. Doran, Executive Editor of The Patriot-News Co., February 5, 1969.
23. Pennsylvania Department of Property and Supplies, The Pennsylvania Manual (Harrisburg: Department of Property and Supplies, vol. 98, 1967), p. 591.
24. Pennsylvania Bureau of Statistics, Pennsylvania Industrial Directory (Harrisburg: Department of Property and Supplies, 1968), p. 662.
25. The Pennsylvania Manual, p. 591.
26. U. S. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, July 26, 1968, p. 1939.
27. Ibid., p. 1939.
28. Interview with Congressman Schneebeli, February 5, 1969.

29. Interview with Congressman Schneebeli, February  
5, 1969. Chapter 1.1

30. Interview with Congressman Schneebeli, February  
5, 1969.

Chapter III

CASE STUDY

Congressman Schneebeli, during an interview with this writer on February 5, 1969, confirmed that he was opposed to registration of firearms and licensing of gun owners as proposed in the original Administration bill supported by President Johnson. With Judiciary Committee Chairman Celler's pledge to oppose any attempts to add registration and licensing amendments on the House floor (see page eleven), no such amendments passed or received a roll-call vote. However, on July 19, 1968, an amendment offered by Jonathan B. Bingham (D. N.Y.) requiring registration of all firearms was defeated by a 68-172 teller vote. On that same day the House rejected by an 89-168 teller vote an amendment offered by Robert McClory (R. Ill.) that would have required registration of handguns only. "It appeared from the gallery that the vast majority of Republicans and nearly all Southern Democrats voted against the amendments." <sup>1</sup> Due to his unequivocal opposition to federal registration and licensing, it would be proper to assume that Congressman Schneebeli voted against these amendments.

Also, in this same interview, the Congressman asserted that he was uninfluenced by any interest group, party pressure, or publication in deciding how to vote on the gun-control

measures presented in the House during 1968. Further, having stated that the constituent mail directed at gun-control legislation served to "support" his view, the Congressman implied that he had formulated his view against registration and licensing prior to receiving any mail on the issue. Therefore, Congressman Schneebeli indicated that his personal judgement was the sole criteria for deciding how to vote on the bills and amendments concerning gun-control. The purpose of this section is to prove that he was influenced by outside sources, to reveal these sources, and further to disclose all the sources of public pressure, including those that had no influence on the Representative. The sources studied are divided into four general classes: periodicals and newspapers, organized interest groups, party pressure, and constituent interest as expressed primarily in letters to the Congressman.

## II

While each national periodical appeals to a determinable political, social, or economical group in this society, nearly all periodicals will respond to controversial legislative issues that have nationwide significance. Thus, in responding to such issues, national periodicals serve many congressmen as outside sources of influence. To study the issue of gun-control legislation, this writer divided the national periodicals into three classes with the following subheadings: news magazines, opinion

journals, and outdoor-sportsmen magazines. The method of studying the periodicals was to review all the magazines that, according to Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, included the subject of gun-control in their 1968 summer issues. Also, *because* that many of the outdoor magazines were unlisted in Reader's Guide, this writer reviewed the summer issues of the three major outdoor periodicals, recording the viewpoints on gun-control as expressed in articles, editorials, and letters-to-the-editors.

The three major news magazines, U. S. News and World Report, Time and Newsweek, all contained articles on gun-control in their 1968 summer issues. U. S. News with a weekly distribution of 1,584,073 did no more than report the progress of the related bills and predict their probability of passage. However, Newsweek with a weekly circulation of 2,128,032 copies and Time distributing 3,710,134 issues weekly showed a clear bias supporting strict gun-control legislation and criticizing the N. R. A.'s attempt to halt the legislation. The June 17, 1968 issue of Newsweek gave the statistics for the number of Americans killed by privately owned guns and added ". . . the very availability of firearms in the United States amounts in one breath to a national tradition and a national tragedy." <sup>2</sup> The same article reports the findings of the spring 1968 Gallup polls that indicate most people favor the registration of all firearms in the country. The article ends with a quote from Robert Kennedy's speech of

two years ago that clearly indicates the position of this news magazine on gun-control. "For too long, we have dealt with deadly weapons as if they were harmless toys. It is time that we wipe this stain of violence from our land." <sup>3</sup>

The June 24, 1968 issue of Newsweek reveals its strong stand against the National Rifle Association. This article was written while Congress was being flooded with mail favoring strong legislation and also, the article was printed after the N. R. A. released a letter on June 15 encouraging its members to write their Congressmen to oppose gun legislation. The article called the N. R. A. a "militant" and "frantic" organization that was urging a write-in campaign against controls. Commenting on the need for more public letters favoring strong controls, the article added:

A total effort may still be needed. Impressive as the avalanche of mail has been, another one is bound to hit Washington as a result of the N. R. A. appeal to its members - and in the past, no one has challenged the N. R. A.'s boast that it can mobilize 500,000 letters on a gun issue within seventy-two hours. <sup>4</sup>

Also, in this article, Newsweek charged the National Rifle Association of erroneously interpreting registration and licensing bills in their bulletin to their members. In that bulletin, N. R. A. Headquarters stated that such bills threatened ". . . complete abolition of civilian ownership of arms." <sup>5</sup>

Time magazine continued the trend of disputing the tactics of the N. R. A. Time, in the June 21, 1968 issue, argues

against the N. R. A.'s four major claims of why gun-control legislation should be voted down. For example, one disputed claim is that the constitutional right to bear arms will be infringed if gun-control bills are passed. Time reports that the Supreme Court ruled as far back as 1939 that the amendment expressly concerns the preservation or efficiency of a well-regulated militia. Also, this article reports the results of Gallup polls over the past thirty-four years to accuse Congress of ignoring the will of public opinion concerning gun-control. "Congress has assiduously ignored such evidence of public opinion. Attempts to tighten the absurdly loose laws have repeatedly been defeated, largely due to the efforts of the 1,000,000 member N. R. A." <sup>6</sup> Finally, the article reveals support for the Administration's Gun-Control Bill of 1968 which includes registration and licensing by calling the bill "intelligent gun-control legislation."

Thus Newsweek and Time, being listed by Congressman Schneebeli as among those periodicals most consistently read by him, disclose a strong position of favoring registration and licensing bills and opposing the viewpoint and tactics of the N. R. A. By disclosing the reoccurring patterns of the Gallup polls and at the same time reporting the letter mobilization power of the N. R. A., the news magazines serve as a clear warning to the possibility of Congress mistaking the voice of

the N. R. A. for the view of the general public. Congressman Schneebeli apparently failed to heed the warning since later evidence will reveal that he mistook the vast outpouring of negative gun-control letters as a representation of a mandate from his constituency.

Of all the opinion journals that printed editorials or articles on gun-control during the summer months of 1968, only one failed to observe the threat of Congress placing the interest of one group above the public interest. In an editorial on September 21, 1968, New Republic stated that the fight for strict gun-control legislation must be taken directly to the voter, just as earlier battles for civil rights and federal aid to education had to be fought at the polls for fifteen years. The reason that registration and licensing was given little chance in September of 1968 was scrutinized in this editorial:

Supporters [of licensing and registration] tend to be multi-issue people, willing to lend a hand from time to time but unwilling to fight it out day to day back home. And so, by late July, Congress was swamped by a new wave of letters, this time from the shirt-sleeve crowd (N. R. A. members). This flood of missives completely intimidated the House.<sup>7</sup>

In earlier articles, the New Republic, a left-of-center political journal, reported its support for licensing and registration of gun-control bills. An article on July 20, 1968 stated that an effective law must direct itself to the possession of firearms; and therefore, the gun owner must

be licensed. Further, the article asserts that a comprehensive federal gun law would regulate possession by requiring the registration of all privately owned weapons. While supporting registration and licensing as an integral part of a comprehensive gun law, the author of the article, R. C. Jacobs, stated that such a law would do no harm to sportsmen. He added ". . . hunters could enjoy a new security in knowing that a legally incompetent person with a modern semi-automatic rifle is not stalking them as well as the deer." <sup>3</sup>

Nation, a left-oriented political journal, like the New Republic, repeats the threat that Congress may hear the voice of the N. R. A. above the desire of the public regarding gun-control. Nation's editorial on June 24, 1969, refers to the Gallup Poll released the day of Robert Kennedy's assassination to substantiate the public's view regarding gun-control. That poll, as this writer earlier reported, showed that gun owners and non-owners alike favored a law requiring registration of all guns, banning the sale of all guns through the mails, and strict restrictions on the use of guns by minors under eighteen. With such evidence to support their view that the public favors strict gun laws, the editors strike directly at the N. R. A. :

Nation objects to the misleading propaganda that persuades the ill-informed that the right of qualified persons to own firearms . . . is in any way threatened. . . The N. R. A. may have the support of a majority of its members but not of the public . . . It is time to end Congressional subservience to such narrow-minded and narrow-based pressure groups. <sup>9</sup>

Commonweal, a weekly review of public affairs, in its editorials during the summer of 1968, continues with the same format used by New Republic and Nation. The June 28, 1968 editorial referred to the repeated polls of "citizens at large" that show over seventy per cent of Americans favor strict gun-control, substantiating Commonweal's promotion of registration and licensing. However, this editorial also warns of the National Rifle Association's ability to destroy any chance for strict legislation:

Each time legislation has been proposed in Congress the N. R. A. has called its 1,000,000 members to their pens and typewriters and they have avalanched Congressmen with so much mail in opposition that the bills have been killed. 10

The editors of Christian Century, a "liberal" ecumenical weekly, in late June of 1968 called for a continued outpouring of public letters favoring the regulation of the sale and ownership of firearms. They accuse Congress of being "mysteriously mesmerized" by the oratory of the gun lobby. In the same editorial, the N. R. A. is accused of standing against the public outrage, insisting that whatever action is taken, registration and licensing of guns should be omitted. Richard Harris, writing for the literary magazine, New Yorker, as early as April of 1968 expressed his doubt that a registration and licensing bill could pass Congress. "In the end, the prospects for strict gun-control legislation appeared to be

as dim as ever - unless, of course, members of Congress decided to put public interest above their own." 11

The two remaining opinion journals that printed articles or editorials during the period under study used somewhat different and milder tactics although neither printed an unfavorable word concerning strict gun-control. Good Housekeeping, an all-woman journal, conducted the first poll surveying a strictly female group on attitudes toward gun-control. One-thousand members of Good Housekeeping Consumer Panel were asked whether they agree with Mayor Lindsay of New York City that a permit should be required to buy a rifle, shotgun or pistol, or with Mr. Harold W. Glassen, President of the National Rifle Association of America who opposes such a requirement. "The vote was very close to a decisive two to one, with 63.9 per cent of the panelists supporting Mayor Lindsay and 34.2 per cent lining up with Mr. Glassen." 12 Thus, the Good Housekeeping Poll coincides closely to the Gallup Poll released the day of Robert Kennedy's assassination.

Business Week, much like the news magazine, U. S. News and World Report, simply reported the progress of the legislation as it moved through Congress. Also, in an article on June 15, 1968, the writers of the magazine presented the N. R. A.'s arguments against registration and the counter-arguments presented by the Johnson Administration. Thus, Business Week

and Good Housekeeping were the only two opinion journals that showed no bias for strict legislation including registration and licensing clauses. All of the remaining opinion journals that printed any material on gun-control argue against the N. R. A.'s tactics, warn of possible Congressional subservience to that group, and plead for the adoption of a strict federal law on gun-control including registration and licensing clauses. Thus, if Congressman Schneebeli read any of the articles or editorials printed in these journals, he either simply ignored their statements or dismissed their testimony as totally inaccurate.

The outdoor-sportsmen magazines provide the last section of periodicals to review. While the outdoor magazines are unlisted in Reader's Guide, this writer surveyed the articles, editorials, and letters to the editors of Outdoor Life, Field and Stream, and Sports Illustrated, the highest circulation outdoor magazines, to find written data on gun-control legislation. First of all, Sports Illustrated, with an average weekly distribution of 2,653 issues within the Seventeenth District, reported that their Index Department showed no articles or editorials were done on gun-control during the months of June through September.

Outdoor Life, with an average national circulation per issue of 1,503,318 (Sports Illustrated - 1,361,543) and with a

average of four and one-half pages of advertisements from gun manufacturers per issue, contained no articles or editorials related to gun-control from the months of May through September of 1968. In regard to letters to the editor, only one was printed during this same period relating to gun-control legislation. The letter was an attempt to discredit the proposal of Senator Dodd to register all firearms in the United States. Directed to Senator Dodd, the letter contained the following lines:

It would be a great contribution to the American people if you (Senator Dodd) would sponsor a bill, based on the same commendable principles as your gun-control bill. It would be known as the Thomas J. Dodd birth-control bill. Just as your gun-control bill promised to control death, this marvelous new legislation could promise to control life . . . . The bill would require the compulsory examination and registration of every male citizen at the age of puberty.<sup>13</sup>

Also containing no articles or editorials related to gun-control legislation from May through September of 1968 was Field and Stream, with an average national circulation per issue of 1,423,931 and providing an average of five full pages of advertisement space to gun manufacturers in those issues. Like Outdoor Life, one letter to the editor was printed that contained an opinion on gun-control. According to the letter, gun laws ". . . are made more to satisfy an excited people than to curb crime. This type of legislation hurts sportsmen more than it hurts lawbreakers."<sup>14</sup> Thus, the outdoor magazines

usually concerned with the technical data of hunting and fishing, continued with their usual material despite the controversy over gun-control during the summer months of 1968. Realizing that their subscribers include outdoor enthusiasts other than hunters, these magazine editors may have feared antagonizing a certain segment of their patrons if they assumed a specific stand either for or against gun-control.

At the same time, the news magazines and the opinion journals almost unanimously urged for strict legislation including registration and licensing. Thus Congressman Schneebeli, while remaining resolute in his opposition to registration of firearms and licensing of gun owners during the summer period, was totally uninfluenced by the viewpoints expressed in the national periodicals. Having dismissed these periodicals as an outside source of influence upon the Congressman, this writer turns to the viewpoints on gun-control printed in the newspapers within the Seventeenth District.

Letters were sent to nine of the local newspaper editors that primarily circulate their newspapers within the Seventeenth District requesting that they send copies or publication dates and pages of all editorials, special features, and letters-to-the-editor, published during the months of June, July, August, and September of 1968, pertaining to gun-

control legislation. Of the nine editors who were contacted, three responded by sending all their editorials and the letters received by them relating to gun-control legislation. Executive Editor of the Patriot-News Company, James R. Doran, invited this writer to interview Paul Beers, columnist of that paper, and to review their file on gun-control legislation. Finally, because the Williamsport Sun-Gazette was listed by Congressman Schneebeli as one newspaper he consistently reads, this writer reviewed the editorial page of every issue from June through September of 1968. The editors of three of these newspapers, Patriot-Evening News, Union County Journal, and Central Pennsylvania Labor News, supported strict gun-control legislation including registration and licensing in their editorials. Editors of the two remaining papers, the Williamsport Sun-Gazette and The Danville News remained uncommitted while the patrons, as expressed in their letters, were strongly against strict gun legislation.

Before evaluating the editorials and letters-to-the-editor, this writer again refers to the comments of James R. Doran, Executive Editor of the Patriot-News Company, pertaining to the letters his newspaper received on gun-control legislation. In explaining why he believed their editorials this past summer in favor of gun control represented the view of a majority of their subscribers although letters to

the editor opposed strong legislation, he stressed that nearly all of the letters against control were written in a standard form which "merely repeated" established opinions of the N. R. A. He added that, in part, the National Rifle Association relies on letter writing to newspaper editors to combat attempts for effective gun legislation. The June 21, 1968 issue of Time refers to a number of basic "shibboleths" that are constantly repeated by the N. R. A. officials anytime a gun bill is introduced anywhere:

1. The constitutional right to bear arms will be infringed.
2. Guns don't kill people, people kill people.
3. When guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns.
4. First there will be registration, then discrimination, finally confiscation.

In reviewing the letters to the editors in the local newspapers, this writer looked for such phrases accepting that the presence of these established N. R. A. opinions in the letters served as an indication that the writer of the letter could have been an N. R. A. member or, at least, a person that shared the N. R. A.'s views toward gun-control legislation.

As previously mentioned, the editors of the Williamsport Sun-Gazette with a daily circulation of 31,182 and The Danville News with a daily circulation of 3,472 remained uncommitted regarding gun-control legislation while their subscribers, as expressed in their letters, were strongly

against strict gun legislation. Did these letters contain any of the four basic "shibboleths" that are constantly repeated by officials of the National Rifle Association? Of the seven letters listed by the Editor of The Danville News as "representative" of the gun-control mail received during the relevant months, all contained phrases that, according to Time, are constantly utilized by the N. R. A. officials. The letter on gun control printed in the June 12, 1968 issue of that paper claimed that any recently proposed gun legislation would, if passed, forfeit a freedom guaranteed to us by the Constitution. The author of the letter continued by stating ". . . what we are in danger of losing here, the criminal gains. If any bill is forced on us, it will be the first step toward disarming this free people." <sup>16</sup> Thus, this subscriber was repeating the N. R. A.'s claim that registration is the first step toward confiscation of the arms of the American citizenry. The June 20, 1968 issue of this same newspaper contained another letter that warns of the threat of registration being the first step toward confiscation. "Do not forget that every country taken over by communism was done after gun registration was required." <sup>17</sup> Finally, the August 10, 1968 issue of The Danville News included a letter that repeated verbatim all four of the basic "shibboleths" of the N. R. A. and concluded

with the following statement:

I will conclude in saying that the rural interests of the Danville people are in this matter synonymous with those of other Americans. The need for more gun control is a sham and a farce. Why not register communists instead of guns.<sup>18</sup> . . . Guns don't kill people, people kill people.

The majority of the letters written to the Editor of the Williamsport Sun-Gazette expressed an opposition to strict gun regulation and yet two of the six letters that were printed by the Editor advocated strict control of firearms including registration and licensing. In a note to the subscribers printed in the July 8, 1968 issue, the Editor indicated the trend of the gun control letters and further, gave the reasons for deciding to discontinue printing any additional letters on the subject:

We are in receipt of a dozen letters dealing with current proposals to control the possession of firearms. Most object to control; all of them restate substantially the arguments pro and con advanced in earlier letters to the editor.<sup>19</sup>

While those subscribers that opposed strict gun laws were *not* vehement in their attack on such laws, they all seemed to use the N. R. A.'s claim that when guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns. After making such a claim, the letter contained in the June 13, 1968 issue specified that the "real need" is for greater penalties being placed upon the criminal using any weapon. The subscriber who wrote the letter in the June 19, 1968 issue used the same arguments:

I am opposed to any firearms control laws simply because they go beyond our American concept of freedom and equality. . . . When everyone is disarmed, except the criminal, what will be done to curb the actions of these outlaws? <sup>20</sup>

As mentioned previously, two of the letters on gun control advocated strict regulation. One of these letters attacked the N. R. A. as a lobby that opposes any governmental control of the sale and use of firearms. This subscriber called for "voting out" any legislators who are "cowed" by the National Rifle Association and urged for an outpouring of letters to Congress demanding registration and licensing regulations. <sup>21</sup>

Lewisburg's Union County Journal, with a daily circulation of 1,996, waged a campaign favoring strong controls and opposing the views and tactics of the National Rifle Association. On June 13, 1968, the Editor of this newspaper stated ". . . we favor registration and ultimately further control. Congress should stop being buffaloed by the N. R. A." <sup>22</sup>

The Union County Journal printed editorials throughout the summer months of 1968 supporting its position while the subscribers' mail response remained mixed. For example, on June 27, 1968, the Editor attacked the N. R. A.'s claim that the right to bear arms is a Constitutional right supported by the Second Amendment. The Editor asserted that the National Rifle Association has "successfully hammered into"

the sportsman a misinterpretation of the United States Constitution. Using as evidence the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Second Amendment, the Editor emphasized, ". . . consistently, through the years, all rulings have held the Second Amendment refers to a collective right, not an individual right."<sup>23</sup> The response from the newspaper's patrons was mixed in that two letters praised the editorial while two additional letters defended other claims of the N. R. A. as being valid.

One subscriber defended the National Rifle Association's statement that registration leads to eventual confiscation by arguing that murders will continue after licensing and registration and that "radical anti-gun people," seeing the continuation of murder, will cry for the confiscation of all firearms.<sup>24</sup> One patron that supported the findings of the editorial maintained that the members of the N. R. A. can no longer use the Second Amendment to attack the proposed bills on the licensing of gun owners. The same patron urged that hunters should realize what their unquestioning following of the National Rifle Association is doing to our national life. He identified himself as a former member of the apathetic majority and adds, ". . . we, the silent, but overwhelming majority are now demanding that something shall be done."<sup>25</sup>

Mr. James R. Doran, Executive Editor of the Patriot-News Company, spoke of the "silent majority" when he asserted that while all national opinion polls show that the majority of the citizens favor licensing of gun owners and registration of all firearms, the vast majority of these citizens lack a vital enough interest to constantly remind their state and national representatives of their opinions. The Patriot-News Company, in its Evening News with a daily circulation of 74,624 and the Harrisburg Patriot with a daily circulation of 45,299 has supported all proposals for strict gun regulation including registration and licensing proposals since 1962. In fact, three days before the assassination of President Kennedy, one news columnist for the Evening News, Mr. Paul Beers, printed his first column in support of strict gun control measures. The editorial in the December 14, 1963 issue of the Harrisburg Patriot stated that the N. R. A.'s claim that every citizen has "the right to bear arms" according to the Constitution is a misrepresentation of the meaning of the Second Amendment. "When the Bill of Rights was established, it was clearly emphasized that the reason for the Second Amendment was to assure the security of a free state through a militia rather than standing armies alone." 26

While the gun-control controversy was reaching a peak in Congress during the summer months of 1968, the Evening News

was calling for strict gun control and warning against the "vocal" National Rifle Association misrepresenting the will of the public. The May 11, 1968, editorial spoke about the flood of the National Rifle Association's mail to Congress:

Bags of mail from the small but well-organized National Rifle Association are flooding Capital Hill. Faced with a deluge of letters from such a vocal group, Congressmen are prone to forget most Americans favor stricter gun control laws . . . Congress should include rifles and shotguns in legislation now pending and pass<sup>27</sup> it despite the pressure tactics of the gun lobby.

Despite the adamant campaign for strict gun regulation conducted by The Patriot-News Company since 1963, the mail to the editors remained opposed to strict laws throughout the summer of 1968. Mr. Doran emphasized that he was confident that the letters against strict gun control represented only the view of the members of the National Rifle Association in the Harrisburg area and that therefore, the Evening News and the Harrisburg Patriot would continue their campaign for strict regulation until registration and licensing bills are passed by Congress. <sup>28</sup>

Finally, the Pennsylvania Labor News, a member of the A. F. L. - C. I. O. News Service, with a weekly circulation of 16,870, expressed through its syndicated columnists support for strict gun laws and disdain for certain tactics of the National Rifle Association. Mr. John J. Hilferty, a labor

syndicated columnist, expressed this view in an article on June 14, 1968:

By fighting legislation which would control the sale of firearms to mental defectives, criminals with records, dope addicts and juveniles, it seems that the National Rifle Association is acting against its own interests. The organization is guilty of frightening its membership with a lot of false information. And other people, who are fed up, are beginning to think it's guilty of something else. . . The petitions for better legislation should be kept moving. <sup>29</sup>

Was Congressman Herman T. Schneebeli influenced by the editorials, articles and letters printed in the local newspapers during the summer months of 1968? First of all, the possibility of being influenced by the local editors and columnists can be eliminated from consideration because all those that printed their views on gun regulation favored strict control including registration and licensing legislation. Most of these same local editors and columnists warned Congress of falsely interpreting the outpouring of mail against strict regulation as representative of the public's sentiment on gun control. If, in fact, he recognized this warning, this study will later prove that Representative Schneebeli completely ignored their advice. Thus, the letters to the local editors remain as a possible source of influence on the Congressman in that the majority of these letters opposed any form of strict gun-control legislation. However, this study does indicate that these

letters against strict control may have been written by members and friends of a single interest, the National Rifle Association. Thus, if Congressman Schneebeli was influenced by these letters, he may have misinterpreted the mail to the editors as representing the general view of the public. Earlier study indicates that the Congressman would refrain from intentionally becoming associated with any single interest group. Thus, if Congressman Schneebeli was influenced by these letters to the local editors, he may have misinterpreted the mail as representing the consensus of his constituency.

### III

Congressman Herman T. Schneebeli claimed that he received no party pressure from either the local or national level concerning how he should vote on gun-control legislation during 1968. In an interview with this writer, he stated that the House Republican leadership made no policy declaration as to how Republicans in Congress should vote on the gun-control bills and amendments presented in the House of Representatives.<sup>30</sup> According to the Congressman, the reason that no guidelines were issued on gun control measures was due to the high degree of constituent interest in this legislation. While 72 Republicans and 126 Democrats opposed the amendments, a further example, the gun-control act of 1968 (H.R. 17761) the Congressional districts. This writer found no facts to

disprove the reason given by Congressman Schneebeli concerning the lack of party guidelines on gun-control legislation. The mail received by Representative Schneebeli tended to confirm his statement in that he received over 4,000 letters from his constituency relating to gun control, which was more than he has received on any single issue since he has been in office. The outpouring of mail was confirmed by other House members. Congressman Albert W. Johnson, representing the Twenty-Third District of Pennsylvania stated, ". . . no proposal in modern time has prompted so many citizens to contact or write their Congressman. Up to August 1, 1968, I have heard from 7,121 persons. . . ." <sup>31</sup>

Also, a review of the House Republican's voting record concerning gun control during 1968 indicated that the House Republican leadership made no policy declaration in that the Republicans as well as the Democrats split within their respective party while voting on gun control measures. For example, the Sikes amendment permitting the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice to ship guns through the mail to clubs participating in the civilian marksmanship program was accepted by a 225 to 198 roll call vote with 114 Republicans and 111 Democrats voting in favor of the proposal while 72 Republicans and 126 Democrats opposed the amendment. As a further example, the Gun Control Act of 1968 (HR 17735)

was passed in the House of Representatives by a roll call vote of 305 to 118 with 147 Republicans and 158 Democrats voting for the act while 39 Republicans and 79 Democrats opposed the measure. Thus, while no party unity was expressed on gun-control legislation, one source reported a House voting alliance on certain proposals related to gun control. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report announced that a Republican-Southern Democratic alliance had formed within the House of Representatives to reject firearm registration amendments. On July 19, 1968, Representative Jonathan B. Bingham (D. N.Y.) offered an amendment requiring registration of all firearms which was defeated by a 68 to 172 teller vote. The amendment offered by Congressman Robert McClory (R. Ill.) requiring the registration only of handguns was defeated the same day by an 89 to 168 teller vote. Commenting on the Bingham amendment and the McClory amendment, Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report specified, ". . . from the gallery, it appeared that the vast majority of Republicans and nearly all of the Southern Democrats voted against the amendments." <sup>32</sup> While Congressman Schneebeli was a likely member of this temporary alliance, he acted without any party influence from the national level.

In denying that he was submitted to any party pressure from the local level, Congressman Schneebeli asserted that constituents had no reason to utilize any local political

leaders to contact him in that his communication channels were directly open to his constituency. <sup>33</sup> Confirmed by this writer's experience in Congressman Schneebeli's office, this writer accepts the Representative's assertion. Each constituent letter that referred to the issue of gun-control legislation was studied by a staff member and further, a written response was prepared by the same assistant. Congressman Schneebeli reviewed each constituent letter and each written response prepared by his staff and finally, he personally signed the letter to the constituent. Also, any similar letters delivered to his district offices were forwarded to his office in Washington, D.C., where they received the same consideration. Also Congressman Schneebeli stated that he is responsible to no local politicians for deciding how to vote on national legislative issues and implied that at least one reason for his independence from any local political leaders relates to his "decisive" election victory in 1966. <sup>34</sup> By capturing nearly every county that he represents by a two to one margin, <sup>35</sup> Congressman Schneebeli became a Representative from a "safe" district in 1966 and this victory coupled with an equally decisive victory in the 1968 Congressional election did, in the eyes of this writer, place him above the need for reliance on local politicians to advise him how to vote on national legislative measures.

Having dismissed the possibility of Congressman Schneebeli being influenced by the national or local party levels, the focus of this study turns to organized interest groups. The Congressman denied that he was approached by organized interest groups stating that in addition to individual constituent letters, he did receive letter petitions from several area sportsmen's groups. Thus, according to the Congressman, letter petitions were the extent of group contact he encountered while studying gun legislation. Hence, this study reviewed the positions of the various interest groups concerned with gun control, attempting to determine the extent that these groups could have influenced the constituency of the Seventeenth District and, therefore, indirectly influenced the Congressman through constituent mail. Further, this study examined the possibility that these groups directly influenced Congressman Schneebeli by <sup>this writer</sup> comparing their positions with the opinion reflected in Congressman Schneebeli's voting record.

According to an article in the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, "... the National Rifle Association is by far the most powerful pressure group against strong firearms-control measures." <sup>37</sup> Before studying the tactics and possible

influence from this pressure group, this paper will review the manipulations of those other organizations interested in the legislation. The same article in the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report listed the National Wildlife Federation as an organization that follows the lead of the National Rifle Association on legislative matters and, also, this article listed the Council for a Responsible Firearms Policy as the only organization, ". . . primarily concerned with enacting stronger gun-control laws..."<sup>38</sup> Carl Bakal, in The Right to Bear Arms, having agreed that the Council for Responsible Firearms Policy is the only organized group directly concerned with enactment of strict gun-control laws, added several organizations to the list of those maintaining "close ties" with the N. R. A.<sup>39</sup>

Using Carl Bakal's list and those organizations mentioned in the April 12, 1968, issue of Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, this writer contacted the following organizations: National Rifle Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, John Birch Society, Izaak Walton League,

National Council of the Boy Scouts of America, National Wildlife Federation, and Reserve Officers Association. These organizations were contacted by mail on January 17, 1969, and were requested to respond to three questions. First, what official stand did your organization assume on the issue of gun control during the summer of 1968? Secondly, can your organization provide a membership breakdown for the counties

of Dauphin, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, and Union? Finally, did your organization make any efforts to contact your members regarding gun-control legislation?

The American Legion National Headquarters revealed that Pennsylvania has 175,156 members and that they only listed their membership size according to states. Also, Mr. William F. Hauck, the National Adjutant, stated that his organization made no particular effort to contact its membership concerning gun control while their stand on the legislation is contained in Resolution Number 476 of the 1968 National Convention of the American Legion. <sup>40</sup> Mr. Hauck repeated the content of the Resolution in his letter of January 20, 1969:

Whereas, there is knowledge that a home is likely to have one or more guns for either sport or protection, which is a deterrent in this period of alarming crime increase; now, therefore, be it resolved, by the American Legion assembled, . . . September 10-12, 1968, that it is opposed to legislation that would require Federal Registration of Firearms; and be it further resolved, that the American Legion is in favor of legislation prohibiting the purchase and sale of mail order firearms to unlicensed citizens. <sup>41</sup>

While the American Legion made no particular effort to contact its membership, their stand could have directly influenced Congressman Schneebeli in that he is a member of the organization and therefore, could have read Resolution Number 476. However, the possibility of the Resolution influencing the Congressman was most unlikely in that the Resolution was read while at the same time, this was a non-profit organization and the Congressman was most unlikely in that the Resolution was read while at the same time, this was a non-profit organization.

adopted in September, 1968 and the House had sent the Gun Control Act of 1968 to the Senate two months earlier on July 24, 1968. However, it is interesting that Congressman Schneebeli, like the official view of the American Legion, opposed Federal registration of firearms and supported "mild" mail order prohibitions.

Francis W. Stover, Director of the National Legislative Service of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, stated that Resolution Number 266, adopted at the Sixty-Ninth National Convention of the V. F. W. in August, 1968 reflected the position of that organization on the issue of gun control:

We oppose any federal registration of firearms, and specifically oppose any registration of rifles and shotguns or other sporting weapons; and further, . . . we favor the enforcement of existing legislation by law enforcement agencies and an increase in the sentences imposed by the courts for use or possession, or both, of firearms while committing a crime.<sup>42</sup>

Mr. Stover gave no membership figures and indicated that the V. F. W. made no particular attempt to contact its membership.

Also, this organization is dismissed as a group that could have directly influenced Congressman Schneebeli because the

Resolution was adopted in August of 1968.

Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report described the National Wildlife Federation as a non-profit organization that seeks to attain conservation goals through educational means while at the same time, this same report stated that

the organization tended to follow the lead of the National Rifle Association on gun legislative matters.<sup>43</sup> The Executive Director of the National Wildlife Federation, Mr. Thomas L. Kimball, commented upon the proposals for additional firearms legislation before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on June 28, 1968. Mr. Russ J. Neugebauer, Assistant Chief of the Conservation Education Division in the National Wildlife Federation stated in a letter to this writer that the views of his organization concerning gun control were included in that testimony before the Senate subcommittee and that the statement made before the subcommittee was the primary effort by the organization to influence gun-control legislation.<sup>44</sup>

In that statement, Mr. Thomas L. Kimball provided the only available description of the structure and size of the organization:

The National Wildlife Federation has affiliates in forty-nine states. These affiliates, in turn, are made up of local groups and individuals who, when combined with associate members and other supporters of the National Wildlife Federation, number an estimated two-and-one-half million persons.

The reason that this large organization depends primarily on statements before Congressional committees to promote its views is revealed above in that structurally, the National Wildlife Federation is no more than a loose federation

of nearly autonomous groups. Mr. Kimball, in speaking against registration, stated that gun registration laws would discourage the hunters who through the purchase of licenses, tags and permits finance most of the wildlife conservation programs in America. Mr. Kimball further asserted that most American hunters, including himself, fear that registration will eventually lead to confiscation of all guns in private ownership:

Everyone is aware of the public pronouncements by governmental officials that gun registration will not impair the legitimate ownership of guns in this country. May I state frankly that the law-abiding gun owners of this country simply do not believe it. . . . I am hopeful that the majority of the Members of Congress do not support any approach of this type, which would eliminate the hunter and, with his departure, a valuable wildlife management ~~tool~~—plus the almost total financial support of wildlife conservation programs in this country. <sup>46</sup>

Thus, the National Wildlife Federation, like Representative Schneebeli, revealed a deep concern for the licensed hunters in America and a staunch objection to any gun control laws that included a registration clause.

According to Mr. Robert L. Calvert, Planning and Communications Director of the Boy Scouts of America, the organization took no position with regards to the gun control bills. <sup>47</sup>

This writer received no response from the Izaak Walton League, the Reserve Officers Association, and the John Birch Society. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report revealed that as of April 12, 1968, the Council for a Responsible Firearms Policy,

the only organization primarily concerned with enacting stronger gun-control laws, had no full-time staff and little money. In June of 1968, the Council for a Responsible Firearms Policy was the moving force behind the formation of the Emergency Committee for Gun Control, formed in cooperation with at least thirty national organizations interested in rigid gun controls:

The Emergency Committee for Gun Control opened an office in downtown Washington, D.C. on June 18, 1968, and vowed to conduct a strong lobbying campaign. The National Council of Churches and the A.F.L.-C.I.O. were among the organizations in the group. The New York advertising and public relations firm of Papert, Koenig, Lois, Incorporated, which had worked in the Presidential campaign of the late Robert F. Kennedy, volunteered for the Committee. 50

The major goal of the Emergency Committee for Gun Control was to stimulate the public to write their Senators and Congressmen in support of rigid gun controls by the means of a massive advertising campaign. However, the Committee goal was never achieved *because* by the first week of July, 1968, the mail on gun control had changed significantly:

Partly as a result of a June 15 letter from the N.R.A. encouraging its members to write their Senators and Representatives to oppose gun legislation, and partly because the outrage following the Kennedy assassination has waned, many Members of Congress now report that their mail is against strong gun controls. 52

This writer's study of the mail entering Congressman Schneebeli's office found that mass mail against registration and licensing measures began to flood his office on approximately

June 25, 1968, and continued in this same trend throughout the summer. The National Rifle Association's attempt to influence Congress in general and Representative Schneebeli in particular is reviewed before this writer considers the findings in the study of the Congressman's gun control mail.

## v

The National Rifle Association, described by most national periodicals including the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report as the most powerful pressure group against strong firearms control measures, has never registered as a lobbying organization "... on the grounds that its functions are primarily educational and that its legislative activities are not a substantial portion of its total activities." <sup>54</sup> Officially, while the organization states that its purposes are mostly educational, the N.R.A.'s own monthly magazine, American Rifleman, described a particular stand of the organization:

The NRA takes the bedrock stand that law-abiding Americans are constitutionally entitled to the ownership and legal use of firearms. Therefore, the NRA asks the support of all loyal citizens who believe in the right to bear arms. <sup>55</sup>

To assure that this stand is abided by, the organization is efficient in sending information on gun control legislation to its members and in encouraging the members to write letters to their Senators and Congressmen. An official of the National Rifle Association, Secretary Frank C. Daniel, having

admitted that his organization is seldom in direct contact with Members of Congress, added that an NRA appeal could generate a response to Congress of approximately a half million letters.

56

One method that the NRA has used to send information on gun legislation to its members is through its monthly magazine, American Rifleman. The May, June, July, August and September, 1968, issues of this magazine all contained editorials and articles presenting the N.R.A.'s position against strict gun control laws, identifying the Congressmen and Senators who favor strict laws, and requesting their members to write their respective Senators and Congressmen. For example, the June issue printed an article criticizing Senator Dodd and Senator Kennedy for leading the Senate to reject the N.R.A.-favored Hruska gun control program and for leading the Senate attempt to prohibit interstate sale of handguns. The article then listed all those Senators who voted against the N.R.A.-supported Hruska plan and added:

To assist NRA members in informing lawmakers of views, the NRA Legislative Service has prepared two new pamphlets which are free to members...They explain Federal and State legislative processes from the time a bill is introduced until it becomes law or dies unpassed. The pamphlet on the Congress includes a section on how to communicate with your U.S. Senator or Representative. 57

The July issue of the American Rifleman contained an editorial

that voiced the N.R.A.'s oppositions to gun registration. The N.R.A. argued that the basic problem is one of crime, not firearms and that therefore, the problem is not that too many decent Americans own guns but that an increasing number of lawless individuals in our lax and permissive society commit crimes with guns. The editorial added that gun registration in New York City failed to reduce the homicide rate and they added that gun registration may lead to confiscation of firearms in America:

Some anti-gun spokesmen have been quoted as saying they want to dry up the supply of firearms in America. A move was made 50 years ago to dry up the country in another respect. It ushered in organized crime on an unprecedented scale. Its gangsterism is still with us. A return to Prohibition-this time on guns-would seem to be the perfect gift for our criminal element. 59

While an original copy of the June 15, 1968, NRA letter to its members could not be secured, this writer was able to obtain the contents of the letter through a secondary source, the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report.<sup>60</sup> According to that source, N.R.A.'s President Harold W. Glassen, wrote in the letter that the right of sportsmen in the United States to obtain, own and use firearms for proper lawful purposes was in the greatest jeopardy in the history of this nation. Further, according to the June 21, 1968 issue of Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, Mr. Glassen stated that proponents of restrictive gun legislation have as their goal the complete abolition of civilian ownership of firearms. Finally, the letter advised

"every member" to write ~~his~~ Representatives in Washinton.

Letters referring to gun control before June 25, 1968, were entering Mr. Schneebeli's office at a moderate rate with nearly half of the letters favoring strict gun control legislation. As noted previously, the volume and content of the gun control mail abruptly changed around June 25, 1968, ten days after the N.R.A. delivered the letter from Mr. Glassen to its members. The week following June 25, 1968, the mail on gun control ran eighty-five percent against gun registration (strict laws). By the end of September, 1968, Representative Schneebeli had received 4050 letters on gun control legislation with 3240 letters (eighty percent) opposing gun registration and 810 letters (twenty percent) favoring strict gun laws. Of the 4,050 letters that the Congressman Schneebeli received on this issue, 3440 letters were form letters in that they repeated one of two common phrases in a one or two sentence letter and were signed by the respective constituent. With the exception of twenty letters identified as results of the effort of the Emergency Committee for Gun Control, <sup>61</sup> the remaining form letters were against strict gun control legislation. Mrs. Pam Sullivan, Public Relations Secretary for Congressman Schneebeli, and this writer identified the remaining 3420 form letters as "probably" the result of the N.R.A.'s letter campaign effort. The reason for attributing the bulk of the form letters to the N.R.A.'s campaign was due to the phrases con-

... recalled being  
tained in the letters. The phrase that was repeated in over  
two thousand of these letters with little variation was the  
following: "As a law abiding citizen, I oppose registration  
and licensing laws in that such laws may inhibit my Consti-  
tutional right to obtain, own and use firearms." The above  
mentioned sentence closely imitates the argument used by Mr.  
Harold Glassen in his letter to N.R.A. members on June 15, 1968.

This writer and Mrs. Pam Sullivan of the Congressman's  
office attempted to obtain a breakdown of the National Rifle  
Association's membership within the Seventeenth District. The  
NRA insisted that no such breakdown was available while ident-  
ifying the total membership for the state of Pennsylvania as  
58,530 members in September of 1968. Thus, as a final attempt  
to determine how many NRA representative in the Seventeenth  
District wrote Congressman Schneebeli, this writer conducted  
a "nearly" random sampling of forty-eight N.R.A. members,  
asking them two questions. <sup>62</sup> First, did any of your N.R.A.  
representatives contact you or did you read any publications  
asking you to write your Congressman about gun control last  
summer or fall? Secondly, did you contact your Congressman  
by mail or any other means? Thirty-eight of the forty-eight  
members or seventy-nine percent responded "yes" to the first  
question while thirty-six members or seventy-five percent  
stated "yes", they did contact their Congressman concerning gun

control. Thirty-two of the forty-eight members recalled being contacted by the organization and responded to the organization's request by contacting their Congressman. This survey along with the evaluation of Congressman Schneebeli's mail indicates that the greatest percentage of the mail opposing strict gun regulation was written by members of the National Rifle Association.

Congressman Schneebeli, like the National Rifle Association, opposed any form of registration and licensing. For this reason, alone, the N.R.A. could be an organization that did influence Congressman Schneebeli concerning gun control. Further, in that Congressman Schneebeli admits "...constituent views on gun legislation were more important than those on most all other legislation," is it not proper to accept that the one organization that stimulated a portion of his constituency was the most likely to influence him? Thus, while Congressman Schneebeli admitted that constituent views on gun control were of concern to him, while he showed a concern for the hunting interests within his district, and while he denied that organized interests, party forms and periodicals had an influence on his decisions concerning gun control, this writer asserts that the NRA, using an indirect method of pressure by stimulating his constituency, was the primary source of influence on this Congressman.

NOTES

1. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, July 26, 1968, p. 1939.

2. "Guns: Like Buying Cigaretts," Newsweek, June 17, 1968, vol. 71, p. 46.

3. Ibid., p. 46.

4. "A Question of Guns," Newsweek, June 24, 1968, vol. 71, p. 81.

5. Ibid., p. 81.

6. "Guns Under Fire," Time, June 21, 1968, vol. 91, p. 16.

7. "Gun-Control," (editorial), New Republic, September 21, 1968, vol. 159, p. 11.

8. R. C. Jacobs, "Do-Nothing Gun Law," New Republic, July 20, 1968, vol. 159, p. 20.

9. "Guns on Capitol Hill," (editorial), Nation, June 24, 1968, vol. 206, p. 813.

10. "Drop that Gun," (editorial), Commonweal, June 28, 1968, vol. 88, p. 428.

11. Richard Harris, "Annals of Legislation," New Yorker, April 20, 1968, vol. 44, p. 58.

12. "Good Housekeeping Poll: Should a Permit Be Required to Purchase a Gun," Good Housekeeping, May, 1968, vol. 166, p. 28.

13. "Open Letter to Senator Dodd," (letter to the editor), Outdoor Life, September, 1968, vol. 142, p. 4.

14. "The Rush to Control," (letter to the editor), Field and Stream, August, 1968, vol. 73, p. 6.

15. "Guns Under Fire," Time, June 21, 1968, vol. 91, p. 16.

16. "Gun Laws," (letter to the editor), The Danville News, June 12, 1968, p. 41
17. "Our Freedom," (letter to the editor), The Danville News, June 20, 1968, p. 6.
18. "On Gun Control," (letter to the editor), The Danville News, August 10, 1968, p. 4.
19. "Letters About Firearms," (editor's note), Williamsport Sun-Gazette, July 8, 1968, p. 4.
20. "Oppose Gun Curb," (letter to the editor), Williamsport Sun-Gazette, June 19, 1968, p. 4.
21. "Gun Control Law," (letter to the editor), Williamsport Sun-Gazette, June 17, 1968, p. 4.
22. "Our Answer," (editorial), Union County Journal, June 13, 1968, p. 5.
23. "A Well-Armed Militia," (editorial), Union County Journal, June 27, 1968, p. 41
24. "Confiscation of Firearms," (letter to the editor), Union County Journal, July 3, 1968, p. 3.
25. "The Silent Majority," (letter to the editor), Union County Journal, July 3, 1968, p. 3.
26. "Regulating Firearms," (editorial), Harrisburg Patriot, December 14, 1963, p. 7.
27. "Mail Order Guns," (editorial), Evening News, May 11, 1968, p. 5.
28. Interview with Mr. James R. Doran, Executive Editor of the Patriot-News Co., February 5, 1969.
29. John J. Hilferty, "R. F. K.'s Death and Guns," Pennsylvania Labor News, June 14, 1968, p. 10.
30. Interview with Congressman Schneebeli, February 5, 1969.
31. Letter to Colleagues from Albert W. Johnson, September 4, 1968.

32. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, July 26, 1968, p. 1939.
33. Interview with Congressman Schneebeli, February 5, 1969.
34. Interview with Congressman Schneebeli, February 5, 1969.
35. According to The Pennsylvania Manual, Congressman Schneebeli captured five of the six counties that he represents by at least a two to one margin in 1966. In that election, he received 109,169 votes while his opponent received 55,761 votes. The Pennsylvania Manual, 1967, p. 624.
36. Interview with Congressman Schneebeli, February 5, 1969.
37. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, April 12, 1968, p. 806.
38. Ibid., p. 807.
39. Bakal, The Right To Bear Arms, p. 169.
40. Letter from Mr. William F. Hauck, National Adjutant of The American Legion, January 20, 1969.
41. Letter from Mr. William F. Hauck, National Adjutant of The American Legion, January 20, 1969.
42. Letter from Mr. Francis W. Stover, Director of the National Legislative Service, Veteran of Foreign Wars, January 31, 1969.
43. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, April 12, 1968, p. 806.
44. Letter from Mr. Russ J. Neugebauer, Assistant Chief of the Conservation Education Division, National Wildlife Federation, February 19, 1969.
45. Statement of Thomas L. Kimball on behalf of the National Wildlife Federation before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary, June 28, 1968. Copy of Statement provided by the Conservation Education Division of the National Wildlife Federation,

February 19, 1969.

46. Statement of Thomas L. Kimball before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, June 28, 1968.

47. Letter from Mr. Robert L. Calvert, Planning and Communications Director of the Boy Scouts of America, January 27, 1969.

48. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, April 12, 1968, p. 806.

49. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, June 21, 1968, p. 1557.

50. Ibid., p. 1557.

51. Ibid., p. 1557.

52. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, July 5, 1968, p. 1649.

53. Study of letters entering Mr. Schneebeli's office, concerning gun control was completed in cooperation with Mrs. Pam Sullivan, Public Relations Secretary for the Congressman. Completed February 5, 1969.

54. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, April 12, 1968, p. 806.

55. "N. R. A. Information Page," American Rifleman, July, 1968, vol. 116, p. 4.

56. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, April 12, 1968, p. 806.

57. "Dodd and Company Block N. R. A. Plan," American Rifleman, June, 1968, vol. 116, p. 47.

58. "Can Three Assassins Kill a Civil Right," (editorial), American Rifleman, July, 1968, vol. 116, p. 16.

59. Ibid., p. 16.

60. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, June 21, 1968, p. 1507.

61. Identified as Emergency Committee for Gun Control effort in that the twenty letters were printed coupons calling for registration and licensing laws clipped from advertisements sponsored by the Emergency Committee for Gun Control.

62. The sampling was "nearly" random in that many members were people I personally knew as N. R. A. members or that friends of mine knew as N. R. A. members. The sampling was conducted mainly in the Williamsport area and in the Shamokin area of the Seventeenth District during the third week of November in 1968.

63. Interview with Congressman Schneebell, February 5, 1969.

Chapter IV

CONCLUSION

Although Congressman Schneebeli denies that any major interests -- periodicals, party levels, organized interest group -- influenced his decision on gun control, this writer has indicated that at least one organized interest, the National Rifle Association, influenced the Congressman by stimulating its members within the Seventeenth District to write Representative Schneebeli's office expressing their views on gun legislation. The possible influence from the national and local periodicals and newspapers was dismissed in that the views of the editors, columnists, and other writers of the periodicals and newspapers either favored strict gun regulation or made no stand on the controversial issue. The remaining organized interest groups were dismissed in that no evidence could be found to indicate that they made a sincere effort to either directly or indirectly present their view to Congressman Schneebeli. The possible influence from the Congressional Republican Party leadership was rejected because of the nature of the legislation as being the type that aroused the constituency of nearly every Congressional district. Local party influence is also rejected in that due to the

last two election victories of Congressman Schneebeli he has become an independent party politician within the Seventeenth District.

Having recreated the frame of reference that confronted the Congressman regarding gun control and having attempted to demonstrate the interest that most likely influenced Representative Schneebeli, *this writer must answer one question.*

The question arises in that Congressman Schneebeli regarded the majority view in the mail he received on gun control as representative of the general opinion of his constituency while this writer has shown that the bulk of that mail was probably written by members of a single, well-organized interest group. The question to be answered is ; did the majority of citizens in the Seventeenth District of Pennsylvania favor or oppose strict gun-control legislation?

The findings of this study are inconclusive, but this writer cannot accept that the majority of citizens were opposed to strict gun control laws. First of all, nationally, Louis Harris polls showed that the American public favored strict gun control laws including gun registration throughout the summer of 1968. The April 23, 1968 Harris poll showed that public support for registration of all gun sales had risen from last year to seventy-one per cent and that sixty-

one percent of the nation's gun owners supported gun registration! After the National Rifle Association had intensified its efforts to halt strict legislation, a Louis Harris poll published June 19, 1968 found that eighty-one per cent of Americans support gun registration laws. <sup>2</sup>

Within the District, there is more evidence that indicates that the majority of citizens could not have opposed strict gun-control legislation. Of the five local newspapers studied, the editors of three of these newspapers, Patriot-Evening News, Union County Journal, and Central Pennsylvania Labor News, supported strict gun-control legislation while the editors of the two remaining newspapers, the Williamsport Sun-Gazette and The Danville News, remained uncommitted on gun legislation. Also, while the letters to these editors largely opposed to strict legislation, this writer has indicated that those patrons who expressed their views to the editors were probably members or friends of the National Rifle Association. Finally, the letters directed to Congressman Schneebeli showed that the constituents most interest in gun-control legislation were, in fact, opposed to strict regulations. To assert that the constituents who wrote the vast majority of the letters probably represented a single interest group is not enough. The fact is that they did represent those

constituents who were concerned with gun-control legislation and that the remainder of the constituency probably lacked a vital enough interest in the legislation to express their views. This writer believes that, as is true with many legislative proposals, a "silent majority" may have existed with regard to gun-control legislation not only within this district, as this study has attempted to show, but throughout the nation. While the majority of Americans may favor strict gun-control legislation, as expressed in national opinion polls, such controversial legislation is unlikely to be passed until this "majority" makes their opinions directly known to their Congressmen.

NOTES

1. Congressional Record, April 25, 1968, p. 54454.
2. Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, June 21, 1968, p. 1508.

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