

## House Republican Press Release

April 11, 2007  
Press Office: 860-240-8700

### **Rep. O'Neill: Key Committee Approves Compromise Lost, Stolen Gun Bill**



#### *REPUBLICAN PROPONENTS BROKER SUCCESS*

HARTFORD – A compromise to last year’s failed efforts to track missing weapons passed a key legislative hurdle today, when a companion measure to re-fund the state’s gun trafficking task force fashioned by Republicans was approved in bipartisan fashion by the Legislature’s Judiciary Committee. State Rep. Arthur O’Neill (R-Southbury), who serves as Ranking Member of the committee, played a key role in moving the legislation forward.

The bill would fund up to \$500,000 for the gun trafficking task force. Republican committee members cited this as a key factor in their support for the missing weapons bill and moving it through the committee. In 2000, Rep. O’Neill cosponsored legislation supported by both sportsmen and gun control advocates that created the Statewide Firearms Trafficking Task Force. Funding for this program was discontinued in 2003. The bill passed today would again fund the task force to enforce our already strong gun laws, said Rep. O’Neill.

During its brief existence, the task force quickly proved its effectiveness. In its first 10 months, the task force removed nearly 400 illegal guns from our streets from a variety of sources, including gang members, illegal sales via the Internet, and stolen firearms.

A major effort of the task force involved “tracing” all seized firearms in the state, which provided real time information to investigators about the origin of guns seized. Investigators were then able to compare trace information with actual possession and identify those responsible for diverting a gun into the illegal market.

Republican Committee members worked with Democrats to broker the successful compromise. Senate Bill 903 would make the penalty for failing to report a lost or stolen weapon within 72 hours that it goes missing an infraction. Last year, a harsher version of the bill, which would have made failing to report a missing firearm a crime punishable by up to one year in prison, failed in the Democratic-controlled House in the last days of the session.

House Republican Leader Lawrence F. Cafero Jr. of Norwalk praised Judiciary members, particularly Rep. O'Neill, for negotiating a resolution of what was a contentious debate last year.

“This is a common sense solution to an issue that failed last year and I believe it addresses the concerns raised on both sides of how to account for lost or stolen guns,” said O'Neill, adding that the real solution to getting guns off the street would be accomplished through solutions developed by the task force.

The bill now moves to the Legislature's Public Safety and Security Committee, where the debate over gun control will resume. Cafero said that he hopes that the debate will center on reasonable ways to deal with the often thorny gun control matters. “The vote in the Judiciary Committee shows that these ideas and public policy disputes can be dealt with in a bipartisan way,” he added.

SB 903 would levy a \$90 infraction fine for failing to report it for the first offense. Subsequent failures to account for lost or stolen weapons would be treated as felonies and handgun owners would be subject to losing their licenses. O'Neill said the revised penalties were a key component in resolving the debate.