

COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO

STATEMENT ON GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION

May 17, 2000

We are religious leaders of many traditions, but we hold in common the God ordained sanctity of human life. We believe that violence between individuals and in community is an offense against God and a rejection of God's will. We regard the proliferation and use of fire arms in our society as one of the major contributors to that violence, and one of our most serious social and spiritual challenges. We consider the ongoing efforts across our nation to pass meaningful gun control legislation to be of critical importance.

We recognize that the crafting and enforcement of such legislation raises legitimate issues for our free society, but we reject as unfounded the belief that the Constitution of the United States provides categorical immunity from legislation pertaining to the sale, possession, and use of fire arms and ammunition. We also reject the belief that "the right to bear arms" overrides the God-given sanctity of human life, or that it in any way lessens the responsibility of public servants to affirm, preserve and protect that gift of life.

Therefore, in response to this moral crisis, with urgent concern for the safety and well-being of all of our citizens, and in search of those actions which may contribute to the reduction of the unacceptable level of violence in our society, the Council encourages both state and federal legislatures to adopt life-affirming and extensive legislation regarding the manufacture, sale, possession, and use of fire arms, including but not limited to:

The strict regulation of gun dealers and the appropriate registration and qualification of gun purchasers and owners.

The mandatory use of "child safety security locks" and other security devices.

A serious effort to enhance the ban on the civilian sale, possession and use of all "assault weapons" and other rapid fire, anti-personnel weapons.

We call on law enforcement agencies at all levels to enforce aggressively the current laws against the illegal use and possession of fire arms.

We further call on gun manufacturers and dealers to cooperate with law enforcement agencies to curtail the rampant misuse of fire arms and to take all feasible steps to safeguard weapons and their owners from accidental and unintended use.

We commend legislators, manufacturers and gun dealers who have taken steps to achieve these goals.

And finally, we ask the members of our religious communities, and all citizens, to give serious consideration to the demonstrated risks and dangers to self, family and other persons in owning and using fire arms, and as a statement of faith and an affirmation of the sanctity of life, we urge the removal of these weapons from our homes and households.