


[HELP](#)

[E-mail Author](#)
[Send to a Friend](#)
[Print Version](#)

September 13, 2004, 6:30 a.m.

Assault-Weapons Ban, R.I.P.

Good riddance.

By Timothy Wheeler

The 1994 federal assault-weapons ban officially dies tonight. It was a bad job from the beginning, a fraudulent piece of legislation pushed through by hard-line gun-control advocates during the glory days of the Clinton era. To get it through Congress, its backers had to agree to a ten-year sunset provision. The law passes quietly into history at midnight.

Until the last minute, apologists for the ban have tried desperately to breathe life back into it, predicting doom if Congress failed to extend the law. A frantic Sarah Brady from the [Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence](#) (formerly known as Handgun Control, Inc.) [was quoted in the New York Times](#) as warning "The assault weapons are coming, they're coming next week."

Perhaps the most pathetic attempt to spin the law's demise came from a list of medical organizations claiming in a September 7 press release that gun violence (public-health-speak for armed hoodlums on the job) is "an ongoing home-security problem." Nice try.

The medical groups were mostly the same players from the medical antigun advocacy of the 1990s. They all banded together under the [Handgun Epidemic Lowering Plan](#) (HELP

FROM THE AUTHOR

The latest:

[An Extraordinary Flight](#) 04/28

[Dr. Coburn's Operation](#) 04/28

[Outfoxed](#) 04/27

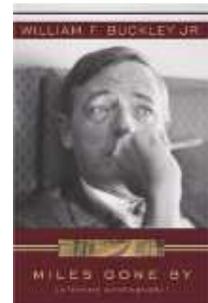
[Sickening Incompetence](#) 04/27

Previous Articles

Miles Gone By

William F. Buckley Jr.'s literary autobiography

[Buy it through NR](#)



NRO TODAY

[O'Sullivan: Rounding Up the Usual Suspects](#)
04/28 1:56 p.m.

[WFB: Hanging Right There . . .](#)
04/28 1:50 p.m.

[York: Out of Nowhere: A Blogger's Best-seller](#) 04/28
10:38 a.m.

[Kudlow: The Greatest Story Never Told](#) 04/28
8:45 a.m.

[Gaffney: Bad Business](#) 04/28
8:30 a.m.

[Ramsay: An Extraordinary Flight](#) 04/28 7:43

Network), run out of Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago. The group includes the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Physicians, and Doctors Against Handgun Injury, all groups whose official policies call for doctors to urge their patients to get rid of their guns.

So strong is the denial of the HELP network activists that they will continue to believe the world is ending, even though most Americans don't even know the law has expired. Here are a few predictions, based on the psychology of criminals and gun-control activists:

Gun crimes committed with "assault weapons" won't increase. Semiautomatic rifles never did catch on in a big way with career criminals, because they are too difficult to carry concealed. As a National Institute of Justice study noted in July, using a broad definition of the term, assault weapons were used in fewer than eight percent of gun crimes even before the ban. The firearm of choice for armed criminals has always been the high-quality handgun.

The HELP crowd and other antigunners will nevertheless maintain to the end that the ban's end will touch off a crime wave of epic proportions. The core delusion here is that all guns are evil. Gun-control advocates will therefore refuse to accept that their condemnation of "assault weapons" has no basis in fact. Even though as physicians they are trained in the scientific method, they will carry this conviction to the ends of their flat earth.

As the assault-weapon panic fades, gun-control activists will find another kind of gun to demonize. In fact, they already have. On California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's desk lies a bill to ban .50 caliber rifles, a target rifle fancied by well-to-do hobbyists. Gun controllers have ginned up a myth of .50-caliber rifles as the new weapon of choice for terrorists, just as assault weapons were supposedly preferred by

a.m.

The Editors:
WOTW 04/28
6:28 a.m.

Nordlinger:
Impromptus
04/28 6:26 a.m.

Hanson: Our
Orphaned Middle
East Policy 04/28
6:25 a.m.

McCarthy: Not
for the Faint of
Heart 04/28 6:24
a.m.

Seipp: They Say
I've Seen the
Light 04/28 6:08
a.m.

Lowry: 9/11
Unvarnished
04/28 6:08 a.m.

Robbins:
Zarqawi's Action
Video 04/28 6:07
a.m.

**Looking
for a story?
[Click here](#)**

criminals. In fact, there is only one reported case of a .50-caliber rifle ever having been used in a crime in the United States. Golf clubs are more frequently used as crime weapons than .50 caliber rifles.

Antigunners will deliberately continue to misrepresent "assault weapons" as machine guns. CNN did it back in May 2003, when it ran a piece on assault weapons but showed video of a machine gun. CNN was forced to issue a retraction when National Rifle Association executive vice president Wayne LaPierre pointed out the obvious lie.

ABC News did it again last week in a World News Tonight advocacy-news piece by Bill Redeker on the expiration of the ban. The segment quoted Los Angeles Police Chief William Bratton, who warned "we'll probably have more of these weapons in the United States than there are in Iraq in the hands of insurgents." Not true. Iraqi insurgents shoot fully automatic military rifles — the real thing. American target shooters and collectors whose guns were banned by the 1994 law only want to shoot their semiautomatic rifles, one bullet with each trigger pull.

Redeker further tried to mislead viewers into thinking machine guns are legal again by showing video footage of a 1997 North Hollywood shootout. In one of the relatively few modern crimes involving machine guns, two bank robbers fired on police with fully automatic rifles, not with the guns now legal again.

Intentionally misrepresenting assault weapons as machine guns is nothing new for the gun-control lobby. But if the public mood about the issue is any indication, the lie is exposed. Congressional leaders held fast to the end, citing their constituents' desires in letting the law die its programmed death.

The experiment failed. The myth of the deadly

assault weapon can now be laid to rest, a victim of its own falsity.

— *Timothy Wheeler, M.D., is director of Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership, a project of the Claremont Institute.*

* * *

YOU'RE NOT A SUBSCRIBER TO NATIONAL REVIEW ?

Sign up right now! It's easy: Subscribe to *National Review* [here](#), or to the digital version of the magazine [here](#). You can even order a subscription as a gift: [print](#) or [digital](#)!

[Home](#) [Find an Article](#) [Find an Author](#) [Advertise](#) [Subscribe](#) [Help](#)