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July, 2001 Sandy's Soapbox

In this month's column (did you miss me last month?), I will address NAA's decision not to conduct business in California, and other issues on the horizon.

On January 1 2001, new legislation became effective in CA requiring all new handguns to achieve 'certification' for sale in that state. This process includes not only conducting 'safety' (drop) and 'performance' (reliability) tests, but also mandates a review of arbitrary size, engineering and design features (e.g. manually operated safety), the absence of which (as well as other similarly ill-advised requirements) largely disqualifies our entire line of guns. [It should be noted that our guns have successfully passed every state safety and performance test that has been designed, including CA]. We'll miss the CA market. If you're from California, get a new government. If that last law was the only obstacle to conducting business in that state, we might reconsider our position and effect the mandated changes, but it's not. More to follow.

Some may have noticed that we don't conduct business in Massachusetts, either. Most manufacturers have abandoned this state, but this time due not to laws enacted by poor-thinking legislators like those in CA, but due instead to regulations unilaterally promulgated by the state's Attorney General, under the guise of 'consumer protection'. Several challenges to this one-person assault on the sale of handguns have been launched and all have failed. Do you think any other state's AG (e.g. NJ, CT ad nauseum) has noticed this successful tactic? Hmmm?? Watch what happens on this front.

'Consumer protection' facades provide some remarkable new fronts from which the antis are beginning new assaults. For example, the Consumer Product Safety Cmsn., while expressly disallowed from passing review on firearms per se, has now embraced the opportunity to certify the effectiveness of firearms *locks*, which now must be able to defeat not only the unintended/inadvertent exposure of firearms to curious children, but also the assault of 16 year old juveniles given ten uninterrupted minutes and a collection of household tools (including hammers, chisels, crowbars, pipe wrenches, hacksaws). This same standard now being drafted by the CPSC already exists in CA (surprise!), which will become effective January 1, 2002. Presently, almost no locking devices exist which will pass these tests, effectively eliminating all firearm sales in that state in six months. While it's likely that several companies in the industry will file suit against illegal restraint of trade and interstate commerce, lawsuits are lengthy, expensive protracted processes. I can't wait to see what comes out of CA for 01/01/03.

The sexy new crime fighting technique being chased these days is "ballistic DNA", a digital examination system which matches spent cases to specific guns, conceptually similar to the same matching of fired bullets to specific guns. Several states now require these spent cases to be supplied by the firearms manufacturer, which are then forwarded from the dealer to the State Police at time of sale, registered to the individual which just purchased that gun. A remarkable database of handgun purchasers and photos of case brass are being accumulated in several states (MD, NY) with many more to come. While it's a tragically flawed (technically speaking) program, and more than a little pain in the butt to administer (from everybody's perspective), several states are now further calling for the inclusion of useable, captured, fired **bullets** from every firearm manufactured for the same purposes. Imagine including that task in the production process. This is not a 'crime fighting tool' but a deliberate attempt to impede the sale of firearms.

Where will this foolishness end? Notwithstanding our new federal government, did you really think the industry - like us, and our customers - like you - would enjoy any relief from these loons? Now is not the time to stop fighting; remain vigilant. [I'm sorry; am I whining? So be it; it's my space. Let me know what you think].