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Congressional Record S. 14689 - Gun Ammunition

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Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, as in legislative session, I submit a report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendments of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 12829) to provide an extension of the interest equalization tax, and for other purposes. I ask unanimous consent for the present consideration of the report.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The report will be read for the information of the Senate.

The legislative clerk read the report.

(For conference report, see House proceedings of November 18, 1968, p. H11034.)

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the present consideration of the report?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the report.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, on November 18, the House and Senate conferees met to resolve differences between the Senate and House versions of the interest equalization tax bill, H.R. 12829. This bill basically extends the interest equalization tax through March 31, 1970.

The House accepted all the Senate amendments to this bill, with a single change—a clarifying amendment to the effective date, reflecting the fact that there was an interval after September 30, 1969, during which the interest equalization tax technically had expired. The modification of the effective date clarifies that the tax does apply in this interval.

The Senate amendments dealing with the interest equalization tax itself were mainly of a technical nature and were approved unanimously by the Senate and accepted by the House without debate.

The only substantial amendment dealt with the repeal of certain ammunition registration requirements. Under the amendment, which the House conferees accepted, registration requirements for short-barrel ammunition, suitable for use only for rifles generally available in commerce, or component parts for the aforesaid types of ammunition would be repealed. Senators will recall that the original committee amendment was modified by the Senate so that purchases of ammunition, such as 22 caliber rimfire ammunition, which might be used interchangeably between rifles and pistols, would remain subject to the registration requirements. This modification is retained by the conference agreement.

Thus, the House accepted all the amendments which were in the Senate bill. All the conferences signed the report. I move that the conference report be agreed to.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The question is on agreeing to the motion of the Senator from Utah.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. BENNETT. I am happy to yield.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I am very pleased that the other body has accepted the provisions proposed by the distinguished Senator from Utah, of which I have the privilege to be a cosponsor, with regard to the extension of the ammunition amendment in a prior bill.

I suppose it is always difficult, especially in public, to admit that one has made a mistake, only the fact that I have made a mistake I do not regret that. I think perhaps it may be a little healthy for all of us to be free to change our minds. In this regard, it became apparent, after the act was passed, that its enforcement was rendered objectionable, that it operated purely to harass those people who could not be lawfully engaged in anything except a peaceful endeavor, the sportsmen of our country, who found that when they sought to purchase ammunition, they had to fill out some sort of application forms. I am glad to make this public statement and to support the conference report.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. BENNETT. I yield.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I wish to say that the Senator from Nebraska is very gratified at the acceptance of this amendment in conference and that it will become law.

The explanations given by the Senator from Pennsylvania and the Senator from Montana are sound and accurate. There is no doubt that the statute as passed in 1968 that this Senator can find which would warrant the lengths to which enforcement authorities did go. The regulations meant harassment and required the building up of huge supplies of paper that mean nothing in the law-enforcement picture. Unfortunately that view is still difficult, and the agency and the law-abiding people and so forth.

As generally the editors are full of emotional appeals. They point out that daily we see holdups, and daily shotguns and revolvers are being used to violate the law.

But since the use of those guns and the ammunition have occurred under a system where there is now a requirement for registration of ammunition, I urge that the people who make such an argument are simply disproving their own case. They substantiate the fact testified to by law-enforcement officers, namely, that registration of ammunition has no effect on the misuse of ammunition.

A law of this kind had been on the books for 30 years and any effort to enforce it was abandoned. The testimony before our subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary this year was to the same effect. It has no beneficial impact at all.

There are no identifying marks on the ammunition. The collection of paper is a futile exercise and it was recommended that the amendment be dropped.

I congratulate the Senator from Utah for conducting these negotiations in such a way that this step, although belated is now being taken.
Mr. MOSS. Mr. President, will the
Senator yield?

Mr. BENNETT. I yield to my colleague
from Utah.

Mr. MOSS. Mr. President, I wish to
join Senators in supporting the fine work
done in this matter of having this
amendment made a part of the bill, and,
therefore, accelerating by some time the
exemption of ammunition from this
onerous registration feature that had
been placed upon it by the Treasury
Department.

In my State, this is the time of hunting
and many of our citizens do this as
recreation. The inconvenience and nu-
sance of registering and giving data
whenever hunting ammunition is pur-
chased has been very cumbersome.

When we discussed this matter on the
floor of the Senate before the matter
went to conference, I pointed out that
I had received over 5,000 signatures on
petitions asking for removal of the regis-
tration of ammunition. Since that time,
when the matter was discussed on the
floor of the Senate, I have received more
than 10,000 additional signatures. That
indicates the extent that this gives con-
cern to those who were sportsmen who
use ammunition for hunting purposes.

I commend my senior colleague for his
fine work in getting the amendment in-
cluded in the bill in the Senate, taking
it to conference, and doing the fine work
he has done in conference so that it was
acceptable to Representatives from the
other body. In this way we have achieved
an equity that has taken the burden off
a number of our people. I had hoped it
could be even broader, but the measure
certainly has accomplished a great deal
and I am pleased this result has come
about.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, will the Sen-
ator yield?

Mr. BENNETT. I yield.

Mr. DOLE. Mr. President, I wish to
say very briefly, as a cosponsor of the
amendment and as one who opposed the
act in 1968 because of the lack of a pro-
vision such as this, that I commend the
Senator from Utah for his excellent work.

The sportsmen in Kansas have the
same attitude as sportsmen in Utah,
Montana, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania.
They are law-abiding citizens. The pro-
vision, as it was, constituted a nuisance
and it performed no useful purpose.
Therefore, I am pleased to see the fruition
of your efforts.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I move
that the conference report be agreed to.

The report was agreed to.

(Unless otherwise indicated the fol-
lowing proceedings, up to the conclusion
of morning business, were held as in
legislative session.)

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