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March 8, 2005

The citizens have spoken and the results are clear – there is **no widespread support** for the proposed legislation to allow the carrying of guns into bars and restaurants. In a statewide poll taken February 17-20, an overwhelming 78 percent of the state's registered voters agreed they do not want firearms in bars or restaurants where alcohol is being consumed. This finding is not surprising -- common sense tells us **alcohol and guns do not mix**. A similar bill was defeated in last year's legislative session. Once again, a minority of gun owners and the gun lobby are trying to force the measure on the public.

Twenty-three states including Arizona have laws specifically prohibiting the carrying of firearms into bars and restaurants. Long ago, these states decided it was in the public's interest to prohibit guns in environments where alcohol is consumed. In recent weeks, the public convincingly defeated similar efforts to allow guns in bars and restaurants in Virginia and Georgia. These efforts were defeated for the same reason they should be defeated in Arizona – they are not supported by the public.

Laws prohibiting guns in bars and restaurants prevent the possibility of death or injury due to gun violence. What the public understands is that prevention is the key. Research on alcohol-related assaults identifies bars as the most common location for alcohol-related violence. Alcohol impairs judgment -- do we really want ready access to guns in an environment where a simple brawl can end in a serious injury or death? It **can** happen. A review of newspaper and media reports indicates a number of incidents where guns and alcohol mixed with deadly results. A few examples:

- 1999 -- An off-duty Drug Enforcement Agency officer, who had run up a \$100-plus bar tab with the help of five colleagues, emptied a 9mm pistol at two men in the parking lot of a Hampton, Virginia bar. *2nd Amendment News, 1/14/2004*
- November 2001 – A concealed weapons permit holder injures 3 people when he discharges his handgun in a tavern. *Philadelphia Inquirer 11/28/01*
- January 2002 – A permit holder's gun unintentionally discharges in a restaurant, injuring a patron. *Indianapolis Star 2/15/02*
- March 2003 – Senate Majority Leader Bart Davies' son, a Boise State U student, is shot and killed at a party by a 21 year old drunk. *The Idaho Statesman 3/18/03*

We represent two Arizona community organizations -- Arizonans for Gun Safety and NAILEM, Neighborhood Activists Interlinked Empowerment Movement with more than 40,000 community members statewide. We stand with a broad-based coalition of groups that oppose the guns in bars legislation. This includes police organizations, community groups, liquor distributors and restaurant owners. Police groups are particularly concerned about the impact of the measure on public safety and on their resources which may be stretched to ensure such a measure is not abused. Bar and restaurant owners do not want any part of the liability and potential danger of dealing with armed customers. Most importantly, community groups do not want to increase the risk of violence in their neighborhoods.

The proposal to allow guns into bars and restaurants needlessly increases the risk to the public's health and safety. As the statewide poll indicates, it is opposed by an overwhelming majority of Arizonans. (The poll was conducted by the Walter Kronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University and KAET-TV/Channel 8.) Legislators should listen to the concerns of its citizens and vote against this measure. Guns and alcohol do not mix. It is only common sense.

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