

By Mr. ABRAHAM:

S.J. Res. 13. A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States to protect Social Security; read the first time.

SUBMISSION OF CONCURRENT AND SENATE RESOLUTIONS

The following concurrent resolutions and Senate resolutions were read, and referred (or acted upon), as indicated:

By Mr. DASCHLE (for Mr. LAUTENBERG):

S. Res. 59. A bill designating both July 2, 1999, and July 2, 2000, as "National Literacy Day"; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

STATEMENTS ON INTRODUCED BILLS AND JOINT RESOLUTIONS

By Mr. GRAMM:

S. 559. A bill to designate the Federal building located at 33 East 8th Street in Austin, Texas, as the "J.J. 'Jake' Pickle Federal Building"; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

J.J. "JAKE" PICKLE FEDERAL BUILDING

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, today I join with Senator KAY BAILEY HUTCHISON in introducing a bill to name the Austin, Texas federal building in honor of a great Texan: Congressman J.J. "Jake" Pickle. Congressman Pickle became an institution in Washington, D.C. throughout his 30-year tenure in Congress, and his dedication and service to the people of Austin and Central Texas continue today. I had the pleasure to serve with him in the House of Representatives, and I hold him in high esteem for the man he is and the spirit in which he served. Jake Pickle walked with giants like Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn, and he is a giant in his own right. I believe that naming the federal building in Austin in Jake's honor is a fitting tribute to his service on behalf of our great state and in recognition of his significant and ever-lasting contributions to our country.

By Mr. DASCHLE (for Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SCHUMER, and Mr. REED)):

S. 560. A bill to reform the manner in which firearms are manufactured and distributed by providing an incentive to State and local governments to bring claims for the rising costs of gun violence in their communities; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

THE GUN INDUSTRY ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 1999

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise to introduce the Gun Industry Accountability Act of 1999 along with my colleagues, Senators DURBIN, SCHUMER, and REED of Rhode Island. This legislation is aimed at one purpose: to force the gun industry to market and manufacture their products in a safer and more responsible manner.

Mr. President, on Thursday, March 4th I was joined at the announcement of this bill by Mayor Bill Campbell of

Atlanta and Mayor Alex Penelas of Miami-Dade County. They represent two of the now five jurisdictions that have filed claims against the gun industry on behalf of the taxpayers of their communities. They seek reimbursement for the massive costs of gun violence within their borders and ultimately, major changes in the way the gun industry sells its lethal products.

Mr. President, the gun industry has long placed profits above the safety of society. The industry ignores numerous, patented safety devices for guns—even things as simple as an indicator of whether a gun is loaded. The distributors of firearms also intentionally flood certain markets with guns, knowing that the excess weapons will make their way into a nearby illegal market. The lawsuits by these courageous mayors will likely prove to be the most effective mechanism to get the industry to alter their deadly practices. The reason is simple: it will bring the gun merchants into line by striking where they are most sensitive—the bottom line.

To aid this effort, the Gun Industry Accountability Act will strengthen the hand of the cities in court against the formidable firepower of the gun industry and its team of high-priced lawyers. It will help these mayors in their quest to get the industry to lay down its weapons, come to the table and finally agree to behave as responsible corporate citizens.

Mr. President, under current law, these cities filing claims against the gun industry are only able to recover the costs that their city or county has paid out due to gun violence. The Gun Industry Accountability Act will strengthen the mayors' hands by allowing them to recover both the city's costs for gun victims in their area as well as the Federal costs associated with these same victims. If a city eventually recovers Federal costs, either through a court judgment or settlement, then the city will be permitted to keep two thirds of the recovery and return the remaining one third to the Federal Government.

By increasing the likely reward for bringing a lawsuit against firearms manufacturers, this legislation will serve as an incentive for more cities, counties and States to join the fight to hold the gun industry accountable. When our legislation passes, it will force the industry to stare down the double barrel of local and federal liability in these suits.

Mr. President, the potential federal liability is substantial. The National Center for Injury Prevention and Control tells us that 80 percent of the economic costs of treating firearms injuries are paid for by taxpayers.

Federal taxpayers pick up the tab for disability payments through SSI, Veterans Administration, Unemployment, Medicare and other costs of treating victims of gun violence.

Mr. President, despite these enormous costs, the gun industry and its

friends in the National Rifle Association will go to any length to avoid accountability. The NRA and its corporate members are seeking state and federal legislation to take away the rights of mayors to safeguard their citizens against unsafe products and irresponsible marketing practices.

Unfortunately, the NRA's drive against the legal rights of local communities has already succeeded in at least one state. In Georgia, the state legislature has already passed a bill at the NRA's request to retroactively block the City of Atlanta's suit. Mayor Campbell has already asked the court system to throw out the legislature's unconstitutional action.

The NRA's extremism has reached new heights in Florida. In that state legislature, a bill has been introduced that would not only block Miami-Dade's lawsuit, but also declare Mayor Penelas a felon! In the NRA's world, a public official should be imprisoned for acting to protect the safety of his or her constituents.

Mr. President, here in Congress there is already talk of Federal legislation to block cities, counties and States from asserting their rights in court. If such a bill is introduced it will prove that the era of Big Government is certainly not over.

Mr. President, I pledge that I will do all I can to make sure that bill will never pass the Senate. Senators DURBIN, SCHUMER, REED and I will work tirelessly against such an unconscionable proposal.

Congress should be helping these local communities make their streets safer—not block them from accomplishing that goal.

To that end, I urge my colleagues to join us in cosponsoring the Gun Industry Accountability Act.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the text of the bill be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the bill was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

S. 560

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Gun Industry Accountability Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress makes the following findings:

(1) Across the Nation, local communities are bringing rightful legal claims against the gun industry to seek changes in the manner in which the industry conducts business in the civilian market in those communities.

(2) Since firearms are the only widely available consumer product designed to kill, firearm manufactures, distributors, and retailers have a special responsibility to take into account the health and safety of the public in marketing firearms.

(3) The gun industry has failed in this responsibility by engaging in practices that have contributed directly to the terrible burden of firearm-related violence on society.

(4) The gun industry has generally refused to include numerous safety devices with