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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON



GUN CONTROL ISSUE FORECAST

September 21, 1981

The pro-gun groups were greatly encouraged by the recent speculation that the Administration intends to abolish the Treasury Department's bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Fire Arms. This announcement came at a convenient time because the gun groups are currently upset at the recommendations of the Crime Control Commission, appointed by the President, which recently recommended additional regulation and control of guns.

We have a pending request from three major pro-gun groups for a meeting with the Administration. They are:

1. National Rifle Association
2. Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms
3. Gun Owners of America

Leaders from these groups, all of which heavily supported the President, should be invited soon to meet with Mr. Baker, Mr. Meese or both. They specifically asked to see Mr. Meese.

Gun groups are among the top three types of conservative groups in political effectiveness. They have substantial resources and a record of concentrating those resources on specific election contests and specific legislative battles.

In 1982 there will surely be an increase in political action by the pro-gun groups. Earlier this month the National Right to Work Committee won a U.S. Court of Appeals case which had been brought against them by the Federal Election Commission. The FEC claimed that the National Right to Work Committee had illegally solicited its contributors as if they were "members". The FEC's position was that only people who qualified under rigid definitions of membership could be solicited by a lobby in behalf of the lobby's affiliated political action committee.

The U.S. District Court decided against the Right to Work Committee but the Appeals Court unanimously reversed the decision and vindicated the Right to Work Committee.

This has particular relevance in the area of gun groups because the FEC had previously moved against the Gun Owners of America and the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms. After spending many thousands of dollars defending themselves, both gun groups gave up and paid fines suggested by the FEC. It cost the National Right to Work Committee in excess of \$400 thousand

to win on this same issue. This legal victory should allow every big lobby to solicit its supporters without having to worry about the FEC's restrictive definition of members. Both major gun groups which had thrown in the towel due to the excessive costs of defending themselves now intend to multiply their PAC efforts for 1982

Planned Actions

1. Continue to work for meeting for Mr. Baker and major pro-gun groups.
2. Track budget cut plans for BATF and keep issue-group leaders advised.