

L.A. police chief backs ban on big ammo clips

Proposal would prohibit the sale or transfer of any magazine that holds more than 10 rounds

AP Associated Press

By **THOMAS WATKINS** updated 3/2/2011 2:14:30 PM ET

LOS ANGELES— The city's police chief on Wednesday endorsed a proposed federal ban on the sale of high-capacity ammunition magazines that have been used in mass shootings.

If passed, the ban would prohibit the sale or transfer of any magazine that holds more than 10 rounds, though possession of magazines legally purchased before the ban's start date would be allowed.

Jared Loughner, the suspect in the shooting that wounded U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and killed six people in Arizona, legally bought the 9 mm handgun he's accused of using at a Tucson grocery store. Authorities say he was carrying extended magazines that hold 30 rounds of ammunition.

"There is no reason that a peaceful society based on rule of law needs its citizenry armed with 30-round magazines," Police Chief Charlie Beck said at a news conference, adding that the clips transform a gun "into a weapon of mass death rather than a home-protection-type device."

The federal bill was authored by Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, D-N.Y., whose husband was killed and son seriously wounded in a 1993 shooting. The sale of high-capacity magazines is already banned in California.

Several law enforcement officials have endorsed the proposed ban, but Beck, who heads the nation's third-largest police force after New York and Chicago, has the highest profile.

"Large-capacity ammunition magazines carry far more bullets than any civilian could possibly ever use," Richard M. Aborn, president of the Citizens Crime Commission of New York City, said in a statement. "Common sense restrictions provide law enforcement with a tactical advantage over criminals, making us all safer."

The National Rifle Association would do everything in its power to stop the law, the group's spokesman Andrew Arulanandam said.

Members of the public should be allowed access to the ammunition clips to protect themselves from attacks by armed mobs, he said.

"When someone is being attacked by multiple people, it is only reasonable that they are given as much opportunity to defend themselves as they need," Arulanandam said.

High-capacity magazines were banned in 1994, but Congress refused to renew the law and it expired in 2004.

Since then, large-capacity magazines have been used in several mass shootings, including the Virginia Tech slayings in 2007 that left 33 dead, and the 2009 attack at Fort Hood, Texas, that killed 13.

McCarthy's bill, which was introduced Jan. 18, currently has 90 co-sponsors.

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