

House decides to give approval to Brady Bill

Imposes a five-day waiting period for handgun purchase

WASHINGTON — Responding to public fear of street crime, the House approved the Brady bill Wednesday that would require a five-day wait and a background check on people who want to buy handguns.

The House voted 238-189 for the bill and sent it to the Senate.

The House also approved Brady last year only to see it fail after being attached to a larger crime bill blocked by Senate Republicans. This time, it is being kept separate in the hope the Senate will send it to President Clinton, who has promised to sign it.

During the debate, Rep. Lucien Blackwell, D-Pa., noted that his West Philadelphia neighborhood has hundreds of deaths each year from pistols.

"We need to stop these thugs from

getting these guns rapidly, and if we pass the Brady bill, we will do that," Blackwell said. "What is wrong with waiting five days to get a pistol? What is wrong with that?"

The Brady bill, named for press secretary James Brady who was shot during a 1981 assassination attempt on President Reagan, would impose a five-day waiting period before a handgun purchase could be completed and would require a background check during that time on would-be buyers.

Rep. Sanford Bishop, D-Ga., supporting a successful amendment to set a deadline of five years for developing a computerized, nationwide system of instant background checks and a phaseout of the waiting period, said:

"If we can check credit card purchases instantaneously, if we can have our policemen check driving records instantaneously, then certainly we can check criminal histories instantaneously."

Rep. Butler Derrick, D-S.C., said a waiting period of five working days

represents less time "than most people have to wait for their dry cleaning."

The amendment, backed by the National Rifle Association and proposed by Rep. George Gekas, R-Pa., was approved by a 235-198 vote. Gun control proponents characterized it as an attempt to gut Brady's effectiveness.

Rep. Mike Synar, D-Okla., called it "a very clever attempt to derail the five-day waiting period."

"Using this amendment's common sense," Synar said, "one would quit giving CPR to a heart attack victim after five minutes."

The five-year deadline was imposed on a provision already in this year's Brady bill which said that when background information is sufficiently computerized and instant checks are possible, the waiting period would end, and instant checks would be required on purchases of both handguns and long guns.

The House rejected by a 175-257 vote another NRA-backed amendment offered by Rep. Bill McCollum,

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R-Fla. It would have pre-empted all state or local laws that require waiting periods once the instant checks took effect. Opponents had called it a "killer amendment" that would "eviscerate Brady."

The Brady bill has been separated from far-reaching crime bills in the House and Senate in an effort to get it to Clinton this year.

Last year, the Brady bill died along with a larger crime bill of which it was only a small part when Senate Republicans threatened to filibuster over changes in rules governing appeals to federal courts by state inmates, particularly those on death row.

The Senate continued slogging through its crime bill. Late Tuesday, Republicans threatened to filibuster the amendment.

The Senate planned to take up the Brady bill after completing work on the crime bill.

Brady, who with his wife, Sarah, has been pushing the bill for a decade, was in the House chamber during the debate.

The House overwhelmingly approved a Brady bill amendment that would require police to provide within 20 days the reason for a denial of a right to purchase a handgun, if the person denied seeks it.

Nine Americans die in British bus accident

FAVERSHAM, England — A bus carrying American tourists to Canterbury Cathedral careened off a rain-slicked highway Wednesday, killing 10 people and injuring more than 30 when it plunged down an embankment.

Nine Americans and the British driver were killed, the State Department said in Washington.

The coach carrying 46 people spun out of control off the M2 motorway in Kent county and careened 20 feet down an embankment after apparently clipping a van in front, police said.

The tour company said there were 42 Americans, two Canadians and a

British driver and guide on board. Police said the driver was believed to be among the dead.

Kent county police spokesman Jon Steel said the death toll was likely to rise to 12. Names were not being released until families were notified.

The accident happened at about 9:40 a.m., some two hours after the coach, operated by a British company called Travelers International, left London. It occurred near the town of Faversham about 50 miles southeast of the capital.

"There were people screaming and trying to get out," said truck driver Richard Hearn, who was traveling behind the bus. "I pulled up and

helped to get them out."

Fleets of ambulances raced to the scene. Paramedics treated some of the injured who were trapped in the wreckage until firefighters cut the passengers free.

Some of the injured were treated on the wet, leaf-strewn embankment before being rushed to Kent and Canterbury Hospital. Others were whisked away by helicopter ambulances that landed on the highway.

Authorities said only two of the injured were in serious condition.

John Walraven, who lives near the accident site, said, "It was the most terrible thing I have ever seen in my

"It was the most terrible thing I have ever seen in my life. . . . There were people on the coach and arms and legs sticking out everywhere." —Walraven, British resident

life. . . . There were people on the coach and arms and legs sticking out everywhere."



STATE WIRE

Nebraskans hope declassified records give answers

OMAHA — A Lincoln woman hopes to get answers about her brother when the Pentagon declassifies most records about Americans missing in action in the Vietnam War Thursday.

Linda Bohac was awaiting her older brother's return so he could give her away at her wedding in 1969 when the news arrived: Her brother, Harold Kahler, a 44-year-old career Air Force pilot, had been shot down in an F-105 over Laos.

She and her family have only sketchy information about her brother — and many questions about his fate.

They're hoping for some answers after records about America's 2,200 Vietnam MIAs, including 24 Nebraskans, are declassified.

The information is long overdue, Ms. Bohac

said. "My brother will probably never walk out of Vietnam," she said. "But somebody else's brother could. I believe some men are still alive, and I don't think they are there because they want to be."

Jim Crabtree, president of the Nebraska council for Vietnam Veterans of America, said he was cautiously optimistic about what the documents will yield.

"Any release of documents is welcome," said Crabtree, who served in the Army during the war. "However, we know there are still many unanswered questions for which the government can provide answers."

"But release of that information would prove to be so embarrassing there is little hope of getting that information out in the very near future."

SPORTS WIRE

Chicago's Thomas unanimously wins MVP award

NEW YORK — Frank Thomas, who set a Chicago White Sox record with 41 homers, on Wednesday became the eighth player unanimously voted the American League Most Valuable Player.

Thomas, who hit .317 and was second in the major leagues with 128 RBIs, easily beat Toronto Blue Jays' Paul Molitor, who received 13 second-place votes in voting by the Baseball Writers Association of America.

Thomas' victory gave the White Sox three of the four AL awards. Jack McDowell was

voted the Cy Young Award and Gene Lamont was voted Manager of the Year. The last team to have three different people capture those awards in the same season was the Atlanta Braves in 1991, when Terry Pendleton was the MVP, Tom Glavine was the Cy Young winner and Bobby Cox was the top manager.

AL batting champion John Olerud, Molitor's teammate, was third in voting, followed by Texas Rangers outfielder Juan Gonzalez. Seattle Mariners' Ken Griffey Jr. and Roberto Alomar of the Blue Jays tied for fifth.

Daily Nebraskan

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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE. Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during summer sessions. Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by phoning 472-1763 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The public also has access to the Publications Board. For information, contact Doug Fiedler, 436-6407. Subscription price is \$50 for one year. Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, NE. ALL MATERIAL COPYRIGHT 1993 DAILY NEBRASKAN

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