



News Release

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AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS CALLS ON U.S. SUPREME COURT TO UPHOLD THE D.C. HANDGUN BAN

Jan. 11, 2007--The American Academy of Pediatrics today called on the U.S. Supreme Court to uphold the District of Columbia's handgun ban. Joining four other groups committed to protecting the health and safety of our children, the Academy argued in the Jan. 11 friend-of-the-court brief that "the absence of handguns from children's homes and communities is the most reliable and effective method to prevent firearms-related injuries to children and adolescents."

"Too many children are injured or killed by guns every year, too many families devastated," said American Academy of Pediatrics President Renée R. Jenkins, MD, FAAP, who also is Professor of Pediatrics at Howard University College of Medicine. "The handgun ban is a crucial life-saving tool for our children."

The 31-year ban, overturned in March 2007 by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, makes it illegal to own handguns in the District and requires shotgun and rifle owners unload and disassemble their guns, or use a trigger lock, if the guns are kept at home. The Academy has joined forces with the Society for Adolescent Medicine, The Children's Defense Fund, Women Against Gun Violence and Youth Alive! in support of the District's case to reinstate the ban.

Among the brief's key points:

- Every year, 90 children under age 14 die and another 1,400 are treated in emergency rooms nationwide for unintentional firearm injuries (see p. 16);
- Half of childhood unintentional shootings happen at home; another 40% occur in the home of a friend or relative. Most occur when the children play with a loaded gun (see p. 8);
- Studies show that gun safety education doesn't prevent children and adolescents from playing with guns when they have access to them (see pp. 10-11);
- The risk of suicide is five times greater when there is a gun in the house; one 1997 study found that 63% of suicides among 15- to 19-year-olds were committed with a gun (see p. 13);
- Firearm violence (homicide) is the second-leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults (10- to 24-year-olds) (see pp. 17-18).

Oral arguments in the case, *District of Columbia v. Heller*, will be heard this spring; a decision is expected this summer.

For the Academy's position on firearm injuries, please go to:

<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;105/4/888>

For a copy of the *amicus curiae* brief, please contact Macon Morehouse (mmorehouse@aap.org; 202-724-3303) or Priscilla Ring (pring@aap.org, 202-724-3304).