

UNDER THE GUN

Aldermen rush through a gun-control law they've barely read to replace a gun-control law nobody seems to have enforced. Who really benefits? Mayor Daley.

By Mick Dumke



On Monday, June 28, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Chicago's 28-year-old handgun ban unconstitutional. Over the next four days, Mayor Daley muscled the Chicago City Council into passing a hastily drafted ordinance that places a whole new set of limitations and regulations on gun ownership in the city.

The "Responsible Gun Ownership" ordinance allows any adult in Chicago with a clean record to register one handgun a month for self-defense at home—but only one gun at a time can be "assembled and operable," and the owner can't take it out of the home, even into the backyard. The weapons have to be registered with the state and city, and their owners must be trained and fingerprinted. Guns in homes where minors live have to be locked away or equipped with trigger locks. And anyone convicted of a gun offense is required to disclose the information in a publicly accessible registry modeled after those for convicted sex offenders.

For Daley, though, the mere existence of the ordinance was far more significant than its contents. Quick passage of a new gun-control law was the mayor's top priority in the wake of the Supreme Court decision: he wanted to announce, in the strongest voice possible, that not even the highest court in the land was going to keep him from regulating guns in his own city. Gun control has been a very successful political strategy for Daley—if not a successful crime-fighting strategy.

The ordinance passed 45-0, with five aldermen failing to show up for the vote. One who was there—but didn't want to be named because there's no surer way to piss off the mayor than to question his commitment to fighting crime—told me he believes Daley is genuinely passionate about gun control. But he said there's a widespread feeling around City Hall that the mayor uses the issue to rally support in high-crime black and Latino communities while avoiding tougher issues like police staffing and deployment.

"It's something he's got to have if he's running for reelection next year," the alderman said.

And Daley leaves aldermen little room for dissension. "Either we enact new and reasonable handgun laws in Chicago to protect our residents—as the council has done—or we do nothing and risk greater gun violence in our streets and in our homes," he said minutes after the vote last week.

In other words: either you see it his way or you're part of the problem. It's a claim Daley and other top city officials made repeatedly over the last few months. On numerous occasions they accused the Supreme Court of being an accessory to bloodshed in the streets. "They don't seem to appreciate the full scope of gun violence in America," Daley said after the decision, "and that it will continue until we understand that there are reasonable and responsible steps we can take as a nation to help end the needless gun violence and harm that irresponsible people bring on our friends and family."

The mayor was so successful at framing the issue this way that he managed to stifle wider discussion about crime and violence and even about the best ways to pursue gun control. And so while city leaders were acknowledging that the old ban was enacted too hastily in 1982—and had been rarely enforced in the years since—they rammed through an even broader gun-control law that the City Council barely reviewed before enacting.

On the Thursday before Memorial Day, Daley held a press conference in the Ogden Park field house in Englewood to discuss a pilot program to get kids off the street this summer. In three police districts on

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the south and west sides, he said, kids caught out after curfew—10 PM on weeknights, 11 on weekends—will be taken to park field houses instead of police stations. There they'll receive mentoring and social services before being released to their parents.

"To me this is the kind of forward-looking thinking we need to embrace in every area of government," Daley said. "We need to conduct pilot programs, be creative and even bold in our thinking and approaches."

But when questioned about issues beyond the curfew plan, the mayor steered the conversation back to the evils of guns.

A reporter asked him about the city's plan to prevent violence over the Memorial Day weekend. "The plan, number one, is that we have a Memorial Day parade," the mayor said. "That's number one. I want to make sure you understand, it's one of the largest parades in the city of Chicago. We have over 9,000 public school students marching, and I want to see all the press there."

Others wanted his take on violent incidents on the north lakefront earlier that week. Daley blamed suburban youth who'd sent text messages to each other to arrange meetings in the city. "We know there's texting going on," he said.

And when asked about a senior citizen on the west side who'd armed himself—in violation of the handgun ban—and killed an armed intruder, the mayor launched into a rant about the evils of guns, gun manufacturers, and gun-rights advocates.

"I think everybody understands the frustration that people have in regards to guns, you know, in that instance. And I think we understand that. But again, the access to guns in America, the access today, it's higher than any period of time in America. And guns on the street will kill people. It's the access to guns that you have in America. And I'm not arguing about this instance. I understand some frustration that's taken place. But access to guns in America will destroy America faster than any war in America..."

Still, another reporter asked: If the senior citizen had followed the handgun ban, isn't it possible he would be dead right now? That's what his family is saying.

"What I'm just saying: access to guns," the mayor said. "You're more likely to get killed by someone walking down the street with a gun. Access to guns."

But what about the senior citizen, Daley was asked—will he be charged with violating the ban?

"I don't know," the mayor said. "Thank you very much."

He grabbed his papers from the podium and walked out of the room.

Police superintendent Jody Weis is fond of making major pronouncements about crime trends and police strategy on Sunday mornings, typically the sleepest point in the news cycle. On the morning of June 6 he held a presser to announce that total crime from the beginning of the year through the end of May was down 5.8 percent from 2009.

But that was hardly the whole picture. Some of the other facts Weis disclosed under questioning were far more revealing.

For starters, Weis acknowledged that murders were up slightly, from 158 in 2009 to 164 in 2010. "Homicides continue to challenge us," he said.

He went on to highlight some of the department's other successes, including weapon seizures. From the beginning of 2010 through the end of May, Chicago police had confiscated 3,513 weapons—an average of about 22 a day. Among them were 130 assault

weapons, or about one a day.

But most of them were seized for violations of state or federal gun laws. Weis couldn't say how the city's gun ban might be helping stop or even slow the flow of arms into the city.

He defended the ban by noting that a woman had been fatally shot in the Calumet Heights neighborhood several nights earlier in a dispute over a card game. "People get upset, they get angry—if that gun wasn't in the house there's probably an excellent chance that woman would be alive today," Weis said. "It's a perfect example of the dangers of having a weapon inside of a home with folks who in my opinion do not have the emotional maturity and stability to have such a weapon inside the house."

But he wasn't any more willing than the mayor to comment on the case of the 80-year-old west-side man who'd shot an armed intruder. "We're still gathering the evidence on that," Weis said.

Mara Georges said it was her understanding that prosecutors usually skip Chicago's ordinance when they decide how to charge someone caught with a firearm in the city: "Typically the charge that will be charged will be the state charge or the federal charge, because it carries more significant penalties."

Someone asked how the number of shootings in 2010 compared with the number in 2009. Weis said he wasn't sure offhand, but a police department spokesman dug them up. Through May, he said, there had been 661 aggravated batteries involving firearms. That's an average of more than four shootings a day, and an increase of 2.4 percent from last year.

Two days later the City Council's finance and police committees signed off on new contracts for police officers and sergeants without any debate or discussion.

But at least the aldermen had a chance to discuss the contracts. Another key matter was left off the agenda altogether: understaffing in the police department.

In April, 20 aldermen had signed a resolution sponsored by Second Ward alderman Robert Fioretti calling for a public hearing on police staffing. At the time there were 11,320 officers on the payroll, 420 fewer than two years ago and 697 fewer than the City Council approved in the 2010 budget. Yet police committee chairman Anthony Beale has never convened the hearing.

"We're looking at it—we're trying to figure out what's the best approach," Beale said after the contracts were approved. "We all know that the police department is understaffed and we would like to get them up to staff and add additional [officers]."

But the city doesn't have the money, he added. "We're in a budget crisis, and right now—I mean, right here, this contract that we're approving today is going to cost the city of Chicago \$370 million. If you add more officers to that \$370 million, we have to figure out where we're going to get that money."

Beale begged for patience, noting that he'd only chaired the police committee since April, when Daley handpicked him for the post even though council rules say aldermen are supposed to choose.

"We're probably going to have some hearings on it," he said. "But again, I'm the new chairman, and as soon as I walked in I had this contract put on my lap. So I've got to figure out all the ordinances before the committee and

then we'll move forward from there. I'm still new, getting my feet wet."

But Beale can move fast when he's pushed. A week and a half later, on June 18, the police and fire committee held a hastily called hearing on another issue—a discussion of "violence and fire arm registration regulation."

From its opening moments, the hearing was a rally for the city's gun-control strategy—a platform for city officials, gun-control advocates, and community activists to argue that the city needed to keep Chicagoans from legally acquiring firearms even if the Supreme Court struck down the ban.

In nearly two hours of testimony, not one witness raised questions about the utility of the ban or other gun restrictions. Nor did anyone discuss other potential causes of violence.

Beale told reporters that there was no need to hear from opponents or even skeptics of the city's gun-control strategy. "I think anybody who's fighting commonsense gun legislation

will be considered the bad guy," he said. "We're trying to make our streets safer."

Still, you didn't have to be Charlton Heston to find the discussion lopsided.

"I was waiting to hear from someone from the other side that I could argue with," Sixth Ward alderman Fredreddena Lyle, a gun-control advocate, said afterward.

Not that the witnesses who testified weren't compelling. Robyn Thomas, executive director of the San Francisco-based Legal Community Against Violence, told the handful of aldermen present—the number in attendance varied from nine to two—that the council could legally enact stringent training and registration requirements. Harvard University economist David Hemenway summarized a number of studies linking legal access to guns with higher rates of accidental deaths, suicides, and even robberies and burglaries.

And it was impossible not to be moved by the appeals of several parents whose children have been killed by guns in the last few years, including leaders of the organization Purpose Over Pain. "I'm asking that, if the gun ban is lifted, that we put a strict law in place requiring that the guns have to be locked up in people's homes," said Pamela Montgomery-Bosley, whose 18-year-old son Terrell was shot to death while unloading musical equipment outside his church in 2006.

But the origins of the hearing were murky. Notice was posted on the city clerk's website on June 16 at 11:52 AM, less than two full days ahead of time. And Beale wouldn't say whose idea it was. "This is something that's very dear to my heart," he said, "and being chairman of police and fire, it gives me an opportunity to educate the community and see what we can do to make our streets safer on a day to day basis, and we're going to continue to do that."

He also wouldn't say whether Daley and his aides had been involved in putting the hearing together. "As the new chairman, you get briefed from the police department and the law department and the different entities, and again I have the charge as the chairman of bringing these things to the forefront," Hemenway told me he'd learned about the

hearing from the nonprofit Joyce Foundation, which has worked with the city to advance gun control in Illinois. Montgomery-Bosley and other members of Purpose Over Pain regularly meet with the mayor and appear with him at most of his public events on gun control. Thomas didn't return my call.

"I want to believe they [the city] didn't spend money to fly people out here," Lyle said afterward.

But Beale and a spokeswoman for the city's law department both denied having anything to do with lining up witnesses. "I think what we saw today was the importance and the passion that the people have that are pushing their legislators to have common-sense gun legislation," Beale said. "We posted the hearing and people asked if they could come and testify. We had people coming from California and we had people coming from Boston, so again, if people hear it outside the city of Chicago, I think everyone would have heard about it."

Richard Pearson hadn't heard about it. Pearson is the executive director of the Illinois State Rifle Association, one of the parties that challenged the gun ban. "I didn't know anything about the meeting, but I don't get invited to those things," he said that afternoon.

The city's anti-gun rhetoric, Pearson argues, "is smoke. They don't want to address the problem of a 49 percent dropout rate or of deteriorating families and neighborhoods. They just want to blame somebody else."

After that evening Mayor Daley and most of his top advisers showed up for an anti-violence march in Auburn-Gresham organized by Father Michael Pfleger, who's crusaded against drugs, gangs, and guns for years. It started with hundreds of people gathered around the front steps of the church Pfleger pastors, Saint Sabina, as he introduced Daley as "my friend and brother."

"No one in America, from the White House to the street, has done more to fight gun access in this country, and has had the courage to stand up against the selling of guns in our streets and the killing of our children, than this man," Pfleger declared.

Daley himself was no less impassioned. He told the crowd that while he and the police were doing their jobs, it was up to them to end the violence in their communities.

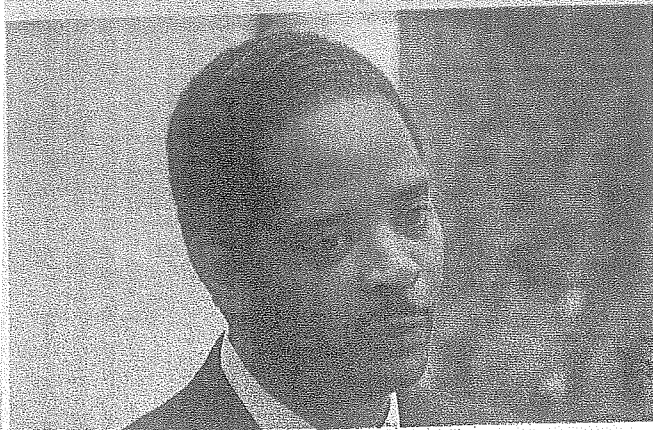
"I can do as many marches as you want," he said. "We can walk up and down the street. We can do everything. But you have to say, one day, 'Enough is enough!' And not just saying the words—we need action on the street!"

"You bring your children into the world—they don't come in with a gun! They don't come in with drugs! They don't come in with foul language!" Daley said. "Who teaches them that? The adults give them those three items."

After speeches by Weis, schools chief Ron Huberman, and leaders of Purpose Over Pain, Daley and Pfleger led a procession along 79th and Halsted, flanked by squad cars and uniformed officers. It blocked traffic for more than an hour.

But when the march ended the politicians and most of the police left Auburn-Gresham, and later that night at least two people in the neighborhood were shot. Dozens of others were shot elsewhere in the city over the weekend.

FIFTY-TWO people reported shot over the weekend, 8 dead, John Fritchey posted as his Facebook status early the next week. "Something has to be done. Now." Two months earlier Fritchey and fellow state rep La Shawn Ford had called on Mayor Daley continued on page 18



Anthony Beale

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and Governor Quinn to consider mobilizing the national guard in high-crime parts of the city. Quina punted to Daley, who dismissed the idea as a quick fix and tried to redirect the conversation, saying the legislators should be focused on helping him get tougher gun laws passed in Springfield: "This is all about guns," Daley said.

But after the 52-casualty weekend, the legislators decided they had to press him harder. On Wednesday, June 23, they held another press conference, this time insisting that Daley wasn't doing enough about violence.

"At some point there is going to have to be some recognition that what we've been doing isn't working," Fritchey said.

Fritchey and Ford argued that gun violence is costing the city money—as much as \$2.5 billion annually, according to one study—in health care, policing and incarceration, and lost business. That works out to \$2,500 per resident.

"If people can't understand for moral reasons that this is a citywide issue, maybe they'll understand it for economic reasons," Fritchey said.

Then they sounded off on the mayor's gun-control strategy.

"We can't continue to focus on guns," Ford said. "It's not guns causing all the crime and violence in our communities. We can't just focus on more gun legislation in Springfield. We have to work on keeping these communities clean and fighting crime. People are stabbing people, people are beating people with baseball bats. This is about more than guns."

"We've had a gun ban since 1982 and since then thousands of lives have been lost" to gun violence, said Fritchey. "I'm not going to say it's not effective but it's clearly not the only answer."

"If they want to discount the national guard proposal, so be it," he added. "But they better come back with another answer. . . . This is a problem that's getting worse, not better."

A reporter asked if they knew Chicago's 2010 homicide count. Fritchey pointed to a poster behind the podium that said "207 murders in 2010 . . . so far."

"It's actually 209 now," he said. "This was printed a day and a half ago and it's already out of date."

The mayor's response? There wasn't one. At an unrelated appearance earlier that day I asked him about the renewed calls for action. He grunted something that sounded like "no" and then ended the event by leaving the room.

Gerald Vernon says he did everything he should have to get permission to hold a town hall meeting at the Tuley Park field house on the south side. He told park supervisor Donna Jones that he expected 150 to 200 people to attend, filled out the paperwork she gave him, paid \$100, and walked away thinking he'd reserved a meeting room for the evening of June 30. The group that would be meeting was Illinois Carry, an organization that advocates for the right to bear concealed firearms.

But on June 23, a week before the event was scheduled, he got a call from Jones telling him his reservation had been revoked.

Vernon says she informed him he had to submit a new application. "She said it could be another two weeks and then a committee would review it," he says.

Vernon, a south-sider who teaches at Northeastern Illinois University's Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies, says he's long believed that citizens should have the right to carry concealed weapons, but became more active in the issue after his girlfriend was robbed last year. "People want the ability to defend themselves and Daley won't let them," Vernon said. "And last weekend we had more than 50 shootings!"

Illinois Carry has been holding public meetings across the state over the last several weeks. "We worked our way into Cook County and held a meeting in Lansing with the whole intention of doing them in Chicago," said spokeswoman Valinda Rowe. She said her organization was contacted by residents of Chatham, the neighborhood around Tuley Park, after an off-duty police officer was killed there in May by four men trying to steal his motorcycle. "People were saying, 'We need to have this conversation here. We need to be able to protect ourselves.'"

As luck and poor planning would have it, I went to the Tuley Park field house myself the night Vernon found out his reservation had been rescinded. I'd heard about the meeting from Alderman Lyle, who was groaning about it during the City Council gun control rally,

but I'd mistakenly thought it was scheduled for the 23rd. Jones let me know that not only was I a week early but the event had been scotched altogether. "It's not going to happen here," she said.

I asked why and she said she wasn't sure. "I just recycled their flyers," she added. She walked over to the recycling bin and fished one out.

After talking to Vernon and Rowe, I got back in touch with Jones. She was certain there would be no gun-rights meeting at Tuley on the 30th. She said Park District officials had decided that the Tuley Park meeting room couldn't accommodate Illinois Carry, but she wouldn't say who specifically had given her the orders. "You would have to call the marketing director," she said.

I called Park District spokeswoman Jessica Maxey-Faulkner. She said she didn't know anything but would look into it and get back to me.

It took her the better part of a week. "Despite published reports, the Chicago Park District has not denied Mr. Gerald Vernon the opportunity to host his town-hall event at Tuley Park," she wrote in an e-mail.

"Mr. Vernon originally requested a room in Tuley Park, which can accommodate approximately 150 people. The event, which has been advertised on a popular radio station, through blast e-mail, and mass flier distribution, will likely attract hundreds more. Mr. Vernon has been invited to submit a permit to host his event on the grounds of Tuley Park, which would better accommodate the potential crowd, and help ensure the safety and well-being of the public."

Maxey-Faulkner couldn't say why Tuley Park officials had declared that the meeting was off altogether. "Clearly all the staff member was certain of was that the event was too large to be held indoors at Tuley Park," she wrote.

Vernon, though, didn't wait on the Park District—he arranged to move the event to Chicago State University. Among the hundreds who showed up for it were demonstrators led by Father Pfleger. "We had the largest crowd there and our young people let them know we won't be disrespected," Pfleger posted on his Facebook page that night.

As expected, the Supreme Court voted 5-4 in favor of the challenge to Chicago's handgun ban. "Self-defense is a basic right, recognized by many legal systems from ancient times to the present day," Justice Samuel Alito wrote in the majority opinion on *McDonald v. City of Chicago*. "Individual self-defense is 'the central component' of the Second Amendment right."

Alito emphasized that a 2008 decision by the court "recognized that the right to keep and bear arms is not 'a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose. . . . We repeat those assurances here. Despite municipal respondents' doomsday proclamations, incorporation does not imperil every law regulating firearms."

He also went out of his way to slam the Daley administration's record on crime. Noting Fritchey and Ford's national guard proposal, he added that Chicago's murder rate is higher than many other large cities' and that black and Latino communities are hit hardest. "The Second Amendment right protects the rights of minorities and other residents of high-crime areas whose needs are not being met by elected officials," Alito wrote.

Daley held an emotional press conference a few hours after the decision was released. Surrounded by city officials and leaders of Purpose Over Pain, the mayor said he was "disappointed" by the ruling and said it left the handgun ban "unenforceable."

"So we're working to rewrite our ordinance in a reasonable and responsible way to protect Second Amendment rights and protect Chicagoans from gun violence," he said. "We'll publicly propose our new ordinance soon."

He wouldn't say exactly how soon, and corporation counsel Mara Georges would only say that it would be introduced to the City Council "on an expedited basis."

Daley was also vague when asked when aldermen would get to see the new gun legislation. "We'll be talking to them again this week, and we talked to a number of them last week," he said.

The mayor and other top city officials were no more forthcoming about why the gun laws were important for police and prosecutors. They couldn't answer questions, for instance, about how many people had been charged with violating the handgun ban.

"I don't have numbers with me," Georges said.

Daley called on police superintendent Jody Weis to respond. "We make arrests every day in terms of unlawful use of a weapon, and we use both federal statutes and state statutes," Weis said.

What about the city ordinance? Weis said he didn't know how many people had been charged with violating Chicago's law. "I don't have that information for you," he said.

Nor is a figure readily available from the police department's news affairs division. When I called there asking for an exact number, I was told I'd have to submit a Freedom of Information Act request. I did. I have yet to hear anything back.

Georges said it was her understanding that prosecutors usually skip Chicago's ordinance when they decide how to charge someone caught with a firearm in the city. "Typically the charge that will be charged will be the state charge or the federal charge, because it carries more significant penalties than the city violation."

"That's right," Daley said, reminding reporters that he'd once been a prosecutor. "That's what we did all the time."

So why do we need new gun-control legislation to replace old gun-control legislation that's functionally redundant with state and federal laws?

"We are a country of laws—we are not a country of guns," Daley said. "I don't think guns protect public safety."

Daley went on to say that the real harm of the Supreme Court ruling is that it will feed America's appetite for violence.

"We kill more people in America than any other nation," he said. "We love to kill. We can kill overseas. We export more guns than anybody else and we buy more guns than anybody else. We should not be known for that."

Beale reconvened the police and fire committee on June 29 to discuss the proposed new gun ordinance. Except there was a hitch: there wasn't yet an ordinance to discuss.

"We're still working on it," Georges, the corporation counsel, said that afternoon. "I hope is to have it done shortly, maybe even continued on page 20"

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tonight, and to get it before aldermen officially by Thursday."

That was news to several aldermen I spoke with. "Nobody's told me anything about this," said one who asked not to be named. "I have to get my information from you guys in the press."

Georges did offer a few clues about what the new law might look like. During the committee hearing staffers gave aldermen copies of the regulations put in place in D.C. after the Supreme Court knocked down its gun ban in 2008. Georges said Chicago's new law would probably be similar to that one, which includes stringent registration requirements and a prohibition on semiautomatic handguns.

She urged aldermen to consider instituting a limit of "one handgun per person per home" and banning gun dealers from within city limits—restrictions, she said, that are allowed under the court's ruling.

But at least a few aldermen wondered aloud why the city had put so much energy into its handgun ban in the first place. Fourteenth Ward alderman Ed Burke noted that he was chairman of the police and fire committee in 1982. "I believe it was in reaction to the outrage over the attempted assassination of the pope," Burke said. "So we rushed to judgments, and part of the problem we live with today was sowed with an overly broad approach. Clearly AK-47s, automatic rifles, et cetera, should be banned.... But I think we weren't willing to recognize the facts because we didn't want to be seen to be weak on anti-gun laws at the time."

Twentieth Ward alderman Willie Cochran, who like Burke is a former cop, sounded just as skeptical. "These guns and the violent use of these guns today is not about the guns themselves," he said. "It's about the hand that it's in and the lack of knowledge and respect that they have for the gun and for the people that they're hurting with the guns."

What's important is to ensure that people have the proper training to use guns, he said. "Personally, my dad started teaching me about guns when I was about five years old. He was a gun owner—he liked to hunt—and he taught me how to shoot and respect a weapon," he said. "Just like we educate people on the ABCs, we also have a responsibility to change our culture as far as the use of guns is concerned. You can go to Arizona, you can go to Texas, and you see people walking around with their six-shooters on, and it's a phenomenon that just exists."

Later in the meeting Weis took questions from aldermen. The Second Ward's Robert Pioretti asked him to clarify how many people have been charged with violating the handgun ban.

"There haven't been many," Weis admitted.

By the next day the mayor and his top aides had arranged for a special council meeting so they could get the law in place before the holiday weekend—even though aldermen still hadn't laid eyes on it and few were even aware they'd be expected to vote on it so soon.

"I haven't seen it yet," 33rd Ward alderman Richard Mell told me.

"We haven't heard anything," said Alderman Lyle.

"Nothing yet," said the 31st Ward's Ray Suarez.

"All we know is speculation and what we've read in the paper or heard on the radio," said

City officials finished writing the ordinance in time for a Thursday-morning mayoral press conference in Englewood. It was missing several components Daley and Georges had said were important just days earlier, including an insurance requirement meant to protect the city from lawsuits and the one-gun-per-person limit. Georges said she'd concluded those provisions wouldn't pass legal muster.

"For the safety of every Chicagoan, I encourage the City Council to move quickly to consider and enact it," Daley said.

The council did his bidding. The ordinance breezed through a sparsely attended police committee that afternoon—fewer than half a dozen aldermen were around for most of the proceedings—and Daley aides e-mailed copies of it to aldermen who weren't there. The aides argued that the law needed to be in place immediately for the good of public safety, and they assured aldermen that it could always be changed later.

That was enough for the aldermen I spoke to. "You want to have something in place to protect the city," Beale told me before Friday's meeting. "And we can always amend it as we need to."

"We know we are going to have to be tweaking this ordinance," the 19th Ward's Virginia Rugai said on the council floor.

"I think this is a good start," added the Third Ward's Pat Dowell. "I think, however, there will be some tweaking of this ordinance that will be required after today."

"Is this a perfect ordinance? Probably not," offered Alderman Suarez. "But this is a good start."

"We understand that it is ever-evolving and there will be changes and there will be modifications because that is what we do in this body," said Lyle.

One alderman after another stood up to give a speech in favor of the ordinance, but few had anything to say about what was in it or how it might help combat violence. "I want to thank the mayor for his hard work in leading the fight for the city of Chicago," said 29th Ward alderman Deborah Graham. "I would also encourage the gangbangers who are going out and getting these weapons unlawfully to stop going out and getting them unlawfully."

Many spoke out in some way against bloodshed—a position that no one was disputing. "All my life I've believed in the Ten Commandments: thou shalt not kill," said 37th Ward alderman Emma Mitts.

The mayor insisted that aldermen had been consulted repeatedly about the new law: "We talked to a lot of aldermen. They had to have input. We made sure they had input. Some of them still have questions about additions they want." But no alderman I spoke with had been consulted beforehand, and several conceded to me that the process had moved faster than they would have liked.

"I didn't see any reason to do it this week," said Cochran. "It merits more discussion." But he said he voted for it since it can be changed down the road.

Tom Allen of the 38th Ward agreed. "Yeah, it was rushed through, but that's nothing new," he said. "The details don't really matter. I mean, it's not like we're selling off the parking meters this time." ■

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