

Additional legislation was passed in 1981 making it clear that the Commission had no authority to regulate firearms and ammunition.¹⁶

According to official documents posted on the NRA website, the leadership believes it is a tribute to Senator McClure and the founders of the NRA-ILA that the precedent set almost 30 years ago remains the line that cannot be crossed today.¹⁷

Section Two: Guns Aren't Supposed to Misfire

Guns and Cars: Two Peas in a Pod

When used improperly, firearms and automobiles are products capable of inflicting damage and death to the user and innocent bystanders. The gun lobby likes to point out that both products are tools capable of productive or unproductive use, depending on the operator. What the gun lobby fails to point out is that the Federal Government regulates automobiles for safety while guns are completely exempt from similar regulation.

Until the 1960s, automobile death and injury was considered an inevitable aspect of general car ownership and operation. Blame for injuries caused by accidents was attributed to the "nut behind the wheel," or the "sleepy/inattentive/incompetent" driver. However, when consumer advocates, and then the Federal Government, began to look at the actual design of automobiles and roads and took steps to change those designs, automobile death and injury rates plummeted. Automobile regulation has mandated the creation of dozens of safety innovations, from seatbelts to collapsible steering columns, cutting highway deaths nearly in half over the years.¹⁸

Today, automobiles must meet safety standards before reaching the consumer, and if a safety defect is detected after distribution, the government has the power to force the manufacturer to issue a recall. Unfortunately, safety regulation of firearms remains stuck in a pre-1960's mindset. A poorly designed gun produced in the United States that shoots out of the wrong end of the barrel is not subject to any regulatory scrutiny.

Another key idea that has made consumer product regulation work is an acceptance that people do make mistakes and sometimes act carelessly. But when they do, the design and distribution of the product can mitigate the consequences. Safety innovation in the automobile industry has shown that regulated design saves lives and prevents injuries, even when people make mistakes or behave irresponsibly. The same

¹⁶ 15 USC § 2052.

¹⁷ "Corzine-Kennedy 'Consumer Protection' Bills Poor Smokescreen for Back-Door Gun Prohibition," NRA Fact Sheets. Retrieved from the Internet at <http://www.nra.org/issues/FactSheets/Read.aspx?ID=149> on January 21, 2005.

¹⁸ According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the U.S. death rate from motor-vehicle accidents has dropped from a high of 28.5 in 1969 to 15.4 in 2002.