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NAPO WASHINGTON REPORT FLASH

BREAKING NEWS, ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN PASSES COMMITTEE

(combined reports from multiple sources, including NAPO, Washington Post and Politico)

The Senate Judiciary Committee has approved an assault weapons ban in a party -line vote that underscores how hard it will be for the measure to survive in the full Senate. The Senate Judiciary Committee has approved a hugely controversial ban on assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips, but the measure faces nearly certain defeat on the Senate floor. The proposal, authored by Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), bans 157 different models of assault weapons, as well as magazines containing more than 10 bullets. It was approved on a 10-8 vote Thursday by the Democratic-controlled committee. All Democrats voted in favor of the ban, all Republicans voted against it.

The measure is not expected to survive in the Senate. Feinstein faces overwhelming GOP opposition and likely defections by up to six moderate Democrats facing re-election next year in Republican-leaning states in the South and West.

Feinstein got into a tense exchange with GOP Sen. Ted Cruz (Texas), who pointedly challenged her on whether the bill complied with the Second Amendment or would be struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. "I am not a sixth grader," Feinstein bristled. "Congress is in the business of making the law. The Supreme Court interprets the law. If they strike down the law, they strike down the law."

But Sen. John Cornyn (Texas), the second-highest Republican in the Senate, said he "must strongly oppose" the Feinstein proposal and echoed the GOP position — backed by the powerful National Rifle Association — that the measure was overly broad and failed to address the problem of the "seriously mentally deranged" getting guns. Cornyn said the assault weapons ban "jeopardizes the self-defense rights of law-abiding citizens while doing nothing to address the real problem." Cornyn also said the proposal would effectively ban "the majority of handguns" sold in the country because it prohibits the sale of high-capacity ammunition clips. Cornyn offered several amendments to revise the Feinstein proposal, but they were defeated by Democrats.

Cornyn, though, did suggest he might support a potential bipartisan compromise on universal background checks if a deal can be reached when the gun bill comes to the Senate floor in coming weeks. Democratic Sens. Chuck Schumer (N.Y.) and Joe Manchin (W.Va.) are searching for GOP backers for that legislation after talks with Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) broke down.

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