

Wed, 25 Mar 2009 17:30

OAKLAND: LOCAL LAWMAKERS ANNOUNCE LEGISLATION TO REGULATE ASSAULT WEAPON MAGAZINES

OAKLAND (BCN)

In response to the fatal shootings of four Oakland police officers over the weekend, two Bay Area politicians today announced plans to introduce legislation that would create a system for regulating and tracking assault weapon magazines in California.

The announcement by state Sen. Loni Hancock, D-Berkeley, and Assemblyman Sandre Swanson, D-Oakland, comes four days after a wanted parolee gunned down four Oakland officers, two allegedly with an AK-47.

The proposed legislation would restrict the use and possession of large-capacity ammunition magazines, defined as ammunition-feeding devices that hold more than 10 rounds. In the past, such devices could not be tracked since there was no technology to do so, Hancock said.

"Possession of assault weapons is banned in California, and enforced through the registration system, but regulation of large-capacity machines is not," Hancock said in a statement.

"I intend to close this loophole in the law by creating a workable registration system which recognizes that there are a few legitimate reasons to acquire, possess and dispose of these devices -- be it in the military or private security, or otherwise," she said.

The legislation announced today would prohibit the possession of such devices unless they are registered to that particular owner, according to Hancock.

A law that took effect in 1999 prohibited the possession of any assault weapon such as an AK-47, and required any assault weapons obtained before 1999 to be registered by their owners, Hancock said.

The legislation also prohibited transactions in large-capacity ammunition magazines, but has proven to be unenforceable due to the state's inability to track the flow of such devices, according to Hancock.

"These weapons fire ammunition that can go through doors and even penetrate bulletproof vests," Swanson said in a statement.

"In the face of these tragic shootings, it is imperative that we take steps to protect our officers and the public from the danger of assault weapons," he said. "Tracking the magazines is therefore an important step in this process."