

After court ruling, towns rush to repeal gun bans

Communities want to avoid costly legal fights

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MORTON GROVE — In 1981, this quiet northern Chicago suburb made history by becoming the first municipality to ban handguns.

Twenty-seven years later, Morton Grove has repealed its law, bowing to a U.S. Supreme Court decision in which the justices ruled that states can't keep guns for self-defense.

It's one of several Illinois communities — reluctant to spend money on legal fights — rushing to repeal their handgun bans. Washington, D.C., ban, even as cities such as Chicago and San Francisco stand firm.

Mayor Richard Krier acknowledges Morton Grove's place in history, but said that didn't affect the village board's decision to allow the possession of handguns. The village still bans the sale of guns.

"There hasn't been any pressure" to keep the ban, Krier said, noting that the village's ordinance has been upheld in court. He also pointed out that the mostly residential village has never had a handgun ban.

Though Morton Grove's gun ban is five years younger than Washington's, it's considered the first in the country because D.C. is a federal district.

Gun rights advocates hailed the Supreme Court's 5-4 decision affirming that individuals have a right to own handguns for self-defense.

The National Rifle Association and others carried their enthusiasm straight to federal court, suing the city of Chicago, a supporter of gun control, and the Chicago suburbs of Morton Grove, Evanston and Oak Park.

Wilmette, another northern Chicago suburb, voted to repeal its ban. Officials there said they believe they were never enforcing its 1989 ban after the high court ruling.

"In my mind we had to repeal," said Wilmette Village President Chris Canning, who is also a lawyer. "I knew it would be under constitutional scrutiny."

Todd Vandermyde, an NRA lobbyist in Illinois, said communities working to repeal their gun bans simply see

“Some communities are truly seeing what is contained in the Supreme Court decision and they’re reacting a

“Others want to spend taxpayer money on some Don Quixote-type quest,” he said, referring to Chicago, whi

withstand any legal challenges.

“We have no plans to amend our ordinance at this time,” said Jennifer Hoyle, spokeswoman for Chicago’s la

has survived three previous court challenges. “We’re prepared to take this fight to the Supreme Court if nece

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom said last month that his city would “vigorously fight the NRA” and defe

Even Washington, D.C., has remained defiant, quickly enacting gun regulations that advocates say are still :

Gun control advocates say communities should not rush into repealing gun bans, arguing that if Chicago an

elsewhere would be protected.

“We went through a lot 27 years ago,” said Don Sneider, one of four trustees who voted for Morton Grove’s

board voted to repeal it.

“There was tremendous pressure from the NRA and from citizens,” he said. “We got threatening letters, lette

had to rush into repealing it.”

Patrick Kansoer, a hunter who is a plaintiff in the lawsuit against Morton Grove, said he was pleased with the

drop the suit because of a possible provision outlawing shotguns.

Paul Helmke, president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, said he was disappointed to see c

financial concerns.

“The pressure that Morton Grove is feeling is because the NRA and the gun-lobby lawyers are pushing thes

decision on where to spend their money,” Helmke said.

He said he is hopeful that Morton Grove and other communities will quickly write new gun regulations, like V

For his part, Krier, Morton Grove’s mayor, said he is relieved that the Supreme Court has handed down a de

on what ultimately isn’t a big issue in a place recently voted by Family Circle magazine as a “Best Town for f

“I don’t blame Mayor Daley and the mayors... they want every tool available to them to stop the violence,” Kr

one homicide, then it’s a good reason to fight it, but we don’t have that issue here in Morton Grove.”

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