Sen. Robert C. Byrd, (D-W. Va.), called yesterday for the death penalty for those who assassinate candidates for President or other officials.

Byrd, Senate Democratic whip, told his colleagues in a speech, "A lot of these nuts are going around the country who are willing to attempt an assassination because they will be confronted only with a few years in prison. We must confront them with the certainty that, whether or not they are successful, they will get the death penalty."

Byrd also endorsed efforts to ban the sale or manufacture of "Saturday night specials"—cheaply produced and readily available revolvers frequently used in murder attempts. A Senate subcommittee has agreed in principle to such legislation.

Rep. Emanuel Celler (D-N.Y.) announced that his House Judiciary Committee would hold hearings on gun control legislation "promptly" after Congress returns May 30 from a Memorial Day recess.

"Gun violence continues to increase and ... the public's demand for stricter control on firearms continues. We don't think total registration or elimination of firearms would accomplish much toward preventing such incidents. When it happens you get this cry for gun control and we don't think it really relates to what we're talking about or what they're talking about: registration," Rich said.

He said the association, which claims 1 million members, favors mandatory enforcement of present laws and strong penalties for violators rather than new laws. "We don't think total registration or elimination of handguns is going to solve the problem," Rich said.

The executive vice president of the National Rifle Association, Maxwell C. Rich, said restricting the ability to possess firearms would accomplish little toward preventing such shootings.

"When it happens you get this cry for gun control and we don't think it really relates to what we're talking about or what they're talking about: registration," Rich said.

He said the association, which claims 1 million members, favors mandatory enforcement of present laws and strong penalties for violators rather than new laws. "We don't think total registration or elimination of handguns is going to solve the problem," Rich said.