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[Advocates of gun rights are poised for a victory](#)

Carl Hulse, New York Times
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WASHINGTON — Advocates of gun rights are poised to win a Congressional victory that eluded them under a Republican president.

To the frustration and discouragement of many Democrats, House and Senate lawmakers and aides say it now appears likely that President Obama will this week sign into law a provision allowing visitors to national parks and refuges to carry loaded and concealed weapons.

The White House is lukewarm at best on the gun provision, which was added to a popular measure imposing new rules on credit card companies. But the Democrats who now control both Congress and the White House appear ready to allow it to survive rather than derail a consumer-friendly credit card measure that Mr. Obama is eager to sign as Congress heads off for a Memorial Day recess.

“Timing is everything in politics,” said Senator Tom Coburn, Republican of Oklahoma and the champion of the gun proposal.

A majority of Democrats in the House and Senate still typically come down on the side of gun control. But the fact that they have been outmaneuvered by Republicans on gun issues is rooted in the fact that recently swollen Democratic ranks include senators and House members who represent Western states and more rural areas where gun ownership is popular and deemed sacrosanct.

When those Democrats team up with Republicans, they constitute a clear majority in the House and Senate.

“It is a shame,” said Senator Barbara Boxer, Democrat of California. “But you have to come to a realization around here that at this point in time, the N.R.A. gets the votes,” she said referring to the National Rifle Association.

“Either you are going to bring down the whole Senate and never do anything or you are going to swallow hard and say, ‘I will just vote my conscience on those amendments and speak out until people get a hold of their senses,’” Mrs. Boxer said.

The ideological split should be on vivid display as early as Wednesday if House leaders follow through on their plan to have an unusual two-part vote on the credit card/gun bill. Under the current plan, the House would vote separately on the gun provision and the credit card elements of the bill, allowing lawmakers who favor the credit card provision but not the gun measure to split their votes and allow those who want both to have it all. The two aspects of the bill would be joined again before the legislation was sent to the White House.

The Senate approved the credit card bill on Tuesday on an overwhelming vote of 90 to 5, showing that Democrats who oppose the gun provision were not going to let it interfere with their backing of the broader legislation.

Mr. Coburn and his allies in both parties say the provision is less about guns than it is states' rights. Under the proposal, people who are otherwise authorized under state law to have firearms would be entitled to have them in national parks and wildlife refuges unless a state law prohibited it. Currently, firearms must be unloaded and secured on those national lands, creating what backers of the bill say is a situation where someone passing through a park with a firearm can be charged with a violation.

"I don't like guns necessarily," Mr. Coburn said. "What I want is those constitutional rights to be protected."

Mr. Coburn has been trying for the past two years to get the measure through Congress. The Bush administration, in its final months, had pushed through a rule change that would have allowed the guns, but in March a federal judge blocked the change. The Obama administration chose not to appeal the decision while a review of potential impacts was made.

Gun control and conservation groups have urged the administration to insist on a credit card bill without the gun proposal. They have also joined top House Democrats in lamenting the inability of Senate Democrats to prevent Republicans from adding such politically charged proposals to unrelated legislation. A gun measure has also tied up a bill granting the District of Columbia full voting representation in the House, and Republicans are readying other gun rights initiatives for future consideration.

"I wish there could be more courage and leadership from our friends on the Hill," said Paul Helmke, president of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, saying he believed that lawmakers were overestimating the gun lobby's political might.

For their part, backers of the gun provision were relishing their looming victory. "After using every legislative trick in the book to prevent a vote on gun rights, Democrat leaders are finally crying uncle and clearing the way for Congress to reinstate the Bush policy," said Representative Doc Hastings of Washington, senior Republican on the House Natural Resources Committee.

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