



Restricting Access to Assault Weapons

HB 1240 (Rep. Peterson) / SB 5078 (Sen. Kuderer)

Assault weapons are exceptionally deadly firearms commonplace in mass shootings. These weapons were designed for the battlefield—they have no place in our neighborhoods. These weapons were used in many of the deadliest mass shootings of the last decade, including the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting, the 2017 Las Vegas shooting, the 2019 El Paso shooting, the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting, and the 2017 Sutherland Springs shooting. It is time for Washington State to prioritize public safety by limiting access to these extraordinarily deadly weapons.

What the Research Says:

Each round fired from an assault weapon has a muzzle energy up to four times greater than a bullet fired from a handgun. This means that assault weapons can inflict greater damage to the human body than a typical handgun—and these guns can fire many of these high-powered rounds extremely quickly.¹ Since assault weapons are designed to fire faster and with increased velocity, it follows that restrictions on assault weapons can prevent mass shooting fatalities and active shooter events.

- An analysis of public mass shootings resulting in four or more deaths found that more than 85% of such fatalities were caused by assault rifles.²
- When assault weapons are used in a mass shooting, 6x as many people are shot. These account for only 25 percent of all mass shootings deaths, however are responsible for a whopping 76 percent of mass shooting injuries.³
- Between 2009 and 2020, the five deadliest mass shooting incidents in the US all involved the use of assault weapons and/or high-capacity magazines: Las Vegas, Orlando, Newtown, Sutherland Springs, and El Paso.⁴

In Other States:

California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and the District of Columbia, have enacted laws that generally ban the sale, manufacture, and transfer of assault weapons.⁵ While many state assault weapon laws are broadly similar, there are some differences regarding which firearms are defined as restricted assault weapons, which if any activities are prohibited with assault weapons, and which exemptions apply to legacy assault weapons.

¹ <https://www.thetrace.org/2017/06/physics-deadly-bullets-assault-rifles/>

² DiMaggio C., et al. "Changes in US mass shooting deaths associated with the 1994-2004 federal assault weapons ban: Analysis of open-source data". *The Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*. (2019).

³ Everytown for Gun Safety. "Mass Shootings in the United States Report 2009-2019". (2018)

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⁵ <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/hardware-ammunition/assault-weapons/>