



Permit-to-Purchase

HB 1143 (Rep. Berry) / SB 5211 (Sen. Liias)

Permit-to-purchase systems, which establish a permitting process to buy a firearm, have been shown to lead to lower rates of firearm-related death, lower rates of guns diverted to criminals shortly after retail sale, and lower rates of guns exported to criminals in other states. Washington needs to establish a permit-to-purchase scheme to ensure that firearms are bought and used by responsible gun owners.

What the Research Says:

- When Connecticut passed a licensing law, its firearm homicide rate decreased by 28% and its firearm suicide rate decreased by 33%.¹
- Conversely, when Missouri repealed its licensing law, its firearm homicide rate increased by 47% and its firearm suicide rate increased by 24%.²
- A study of licensing laws across 80 large urban counties found that these laws are associated with an 11% decrease in firearm homicides.³
- Licensing laws that require an in-person application or fingerprinting also help prevent mass shootings. States with these laws have 56% fewer fatal mass shootings.⁴

Washington Landscape:

In Washington State, there is both a safety training requirement and a 10 day waiting period for purchasing semi automatic rifles. However, these safeguards do not extend to other kinds of firearms. This year there is a proposed permit-to-purchase system in the Washington State Legislature, which will make those requirements apply to all firearms, as well as include enhanced background checks for the permit application, including a complete set of fingerprints taken by the applicant's local law enforcement agency.

In Other States:

While many states have some version of enhanced background checks and other purchasing requirements, only six states have a comprehensive permitting process like the one being introduced, and five states have enacted a permit-to-purchase requirement for select kinds of firearms.⁵

¹ [Alexander D. McCourt, et al. "Purchaser Licensing, Point-of-Sale Background Check Laws, and Firearm Homicide and Suicide in 4 US States, 1985–2017." American Journal of Public Health 110, no. 10 \(2020\): 1546–1552](#)

² [Alexander D. McCourt, et al. "Purchaser Licensing, Point-of-Sale Background Check Laws, and Firearm Homicide and Suicide in 4 US States, 1985–2017." American Journal of Public Health 110, no. 10 \(2020\): 1546–1552](#)

³ [Cassandra K. Crifasi, et al., "Association Between Firearm Laws and Homicide in Urban Counties," Journal of Urban Health 95, no. 3 \(2018\): 383–390](#)

⁴ [Daniel W. Webster, et al. "Evidence Concerning the Regulation of Firearms Design, Sale, and Carrying on Fatal Mass Shootings in the United States." Criminology & Public Policy 19, no. 1 \(2020\): 171–212.](#)

⁵ <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/law/background-check-and-or-purchase-permit/>