



## Lost and Stolen Reporting [HB 1903](#) (Rep. Berry)

In Washington State there are an estimated 4,074 firearms stolen from private citizens each year. We know in reality that number is significantly higher, since many stolen firearms go unreported to law enforcement. These firearms are diverted to an underground market, where people are easily able to obtain them without restriction. Many of these guns are recovered at crime scenes, posing a significant public safety risk. Required reporting of a lost or stolen firearm to law enforcement has been shown to reduce both illegal firearm access and the number of illegal firearms recovered at crime scenes. Washington can further protect communities by requiring gun owners to report any loss or theft of firearms to local law enforcement within 24 hours of discovering it.

### What the Research Says:

- In Washington between 2017-2021 there were 4,074 firearms stolen from private citizens each year, meaning that an estimated 16,296 firearms were taken from Washingtonians over those four years.<sup>1</sup>
- A study found that lost and stolen reporting laws reduced illegal gun movement by about 46% compared to states that did not have reporting laws.<sup>2</sup>
- Mandatory reporting laws for lost and stolen firearms are associated with a 30% lower risk that firearms purchased in that state would be recovered after a crime in another state.<sup>3</sup>
- Nationally, about 380,000 firearms are stolen from gun owners each year, but only about 65% of these gun thefts are reported to law enforcement.<sup>4</sup>
- A study of over 23,000 stolen firearms recovered by law enforcement between 2010 and 2016 found that the majority of these weapons were recovered in connection with crimes, including more than 1,500 violent crimes such as murder, kidnapping, and armed robbery.<sup>5</sup>

### Current State Law:

In Washington, there is no requirement to report a firearm as being lost or stolen. However, if a prohibited person accesses a firearm **due to** the firearm being unsafely stored and then causes harm with said firearm, the owner can be held responsible unless the owner reported the theft to local law enforcement within five days of discovery.<sup>6</sup>

### Other States:

15 states and the District of Columbia require individuals to report the loss or theft of any firearms to law enforcement. The window of time for people to report their stolen or lost firearms in these states ranges from immediate reporting to within 7 days of discovery. Washington's bill would be comprehensive, requiring the reporting of all missing firearms, whether they are lost or stolen. The 24 hour window of reporting in Washington provides a realistic time period for firearm owners to contact law enforcement, while also giving law enforcement the tools they need to act as efficiently as possible.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.atf.gov/firearms/docs/report/nfcta-volume-ii-part-v-firearm-thefts/download>

<sup>2</sup> [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1937604](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1937604)

<sup>3</sup> [https://jhpupress.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/1421411113\\_updf.pdf](https://jhpupress.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/1421411113_updf.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:32630640>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thetrace.org/2017/11/stolen-guns-violent-crime-america/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=9.41.360>