



Permit-to-Purchase

[HB 1163](#) (Rep. Berry) / [SB 5140](#) (Sen. Liias)

Firearm purchaser licensing laws, also known as permit-to-purchase, enhance existing background check systems by requiring individuals to obtain a license before buying a firearm. Ten states and Washington DC have a permit-to-purchase system established, many of them including essential elements like in-person fingerprinting, an enhanced background check, proof of firearms training, and annual rechecks for permit holder's eligibility. Studies show that states with permit-to-purchase laws have reduced firearm diversion for crimes and have lower rates of homicide, mass shootings, suicide, and police-involved shootings.

Washington has already implemented a ten-day waiting period and a training requirement for all firearm purchases, which are common components of a robust permitting system. It's time for Washington to build on this progress by passing the permitting component which will require fingerprinting, live-fire safety training, and an in-depth background check. In addition to ensuring that purchasers are trained in the proper safe handling of firearms, these provisions will help make certain that people who are prohibited from owning guns are quickly and consistently identified, and won't be able to purchase a firearm. Importantly, this bill also requires an annual recheck on permits conducted by Washington State Patrol (WSP), so that if a person becomes ineligible to purchase or own firearms the permit is not still usable.

Permit to Purchase (HB 1163 / SB 5140) will:

- Require individuals to obtain a permit prior to purchasing firearms. Applicants must submit a completed application, fingerprints, proof of certified firearms safety training within the last five years, and the applicable fee to the WSP Firearms Background Check Program.
- Requires the WSP Firearms Background Check Program to conduct comprehensive background checks using federal, state, and relevant databases to determine firearm eligibility.
- Requires WSP to certify firearm safety training programs and specifies they include, among other requirements, live-fire exercises demonstrating safe handling and shooting proficiency.
- Requires WSP to annually verify that permit holders remain eligible to purchase and own firearms.
- Establishes procedures for the revocation of a permit to purchase firearms.

Why this matters:

- **Permitting reduces firearm homicides and suicides:**
 - Connecticut's permit-to-purchase law reduced firearm homicides by 28% and suicides by 33%, while Missouri's repeal of a similar law led to a 47% increase in firearm homicides and a 24% increase in firearm suicides.¹
 - Research shows that if Washington had adopted a permit-to-purchase law when Connecticut did in 1995, there would have been an estimated 1,205 fewer gun deaths in Washington over the first 10 years of implementation.
 - A study of licensing laws across 80 large urban counties found that these laws are associated with an 11% decrease in firearm homicides.²
- **Prevents mass shootings:** States with permit-to-purchase laws that require an in-person application or fingerprinting have 56% fewer fatal mass shootings.³

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

³[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.](#)

- **Keeps Law Enforcement safe:** States that have permit-to-purchase laws see fewer police shot in the line of duty with handguns.⁴

HB 1163 / SB 5140 Permit to Purchase (Rep. Berry / Sen. Liias) will reduce the amount of firearm deaths in Washington state. By establishing systems to complete a thorough background check, provide annual re-checks, and implement adequate firearms training, we are ensuring firearms are only purchased and used by responsible Washingtonians.

We urge your support for HB 1163 / SB 5140 to help reduce preventable firearm deaths.

⁴ [Cassandra K. Crifasi, et al., "Effects of state-level policy changes on homicide and nonfatal shootings of law enforcement officers" \(2016\)](#)