



LICENSING OF FIREARMS OWNERS AND PURCHASERS

WHY IT MATTERS

The most comprehensive licensing laws require all gun owners to possess a license and regularly renew it. These licenses may only be issued or renewed after the applicant has undergone a background check and safety training, and has passed written and performance-based tests showing that the applicant knows how to safely load, fire, and store a gun and has knowledge of relevant firearms laws.

Licensing laws are one method for closing the “private sale loophole” and ensuring that every person who purchases or possesses a gun has undergone a background check. Other states close the private sale loophole by requiring a background check at the point of sale of a firearm. But even states that require a point-of-sale background check can benefit from requiring licensing. Licensing laws can facilitate the removal of firearms from people who have become ineligible to possess them. Training and testing requirements ensure that gun owners understand relevant firearms laws and know how to safely store and handle firearms.

Proper storage and handling of firearms help reduce the shocking number of unintentional shootings, firearms thefts, and incidents in which unauthorized persons, such as children and criminals, gain access to firearms every year. Licensing laws also help prevent the trafficking of crime guns.

AMERICANS SUPPORT LICENSE REQUIREMENTS



OF PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT A NATIONAL LICENSING SYSTEM ALREADY EXISTS.
IT DOESN'T.



THE FACTS

A September 2010 report by Mayors Against Illegal Guns found that states that do not require purchase permits for all handgun sales are the sources of guns recovered from crimes in other states at more than three times the rate of states that do not have such laws.

In 2007, Missouri repealed its requirement that handgun purchasers obtain a permit after a background check. Since that repeal:

- **The share of crime guns recovered in Missouri that were originally purchased in-state has grown 25%**
- **A key indicator of crime gun trafficking—the share of guns that were recovered at crime scenes within two years of their original sale—has doubled**

THE DETAILS

In general, licensing laws fall into two broad categories. Ten states require that prospective firearm purchasers obtain a permit or license prior to the purchase of at least some firearms. These laws are sometimes known as “permit to purchase” licensing schemes.

Three states require a “license to own” a firearm. Unlike a permit to purchase, a license to own a firearm must remain valid for as long as the person owns the firearm. The District of Columbia’s registration requirement also functions as a license requirement.

13 STATES

and DC require gun owners or purchasers to obtain a permit or license prior to purchasing a gun:

CALIFORNIA
CONNECTICUT
HAWAII
ILLINOIS
IOWA

MARYLAND
MASSACHUSETTS
MICHIGAN
NEBRASKA
NEW JERSEY

NEW YORK
NORTH CAROLINA
RHODE ISLAND
WASHINGTON DC

LICENSING LAWS ARE ESSENTIAL

Licensing laws facilitate responsible gun ownership by requiring a person to obtain a license before purchasing or possessing a firearm.

Licensing laws are one method for closing the “private sale loophole” and ensuring that every person who purchases or possesses a gun has undergone a **background check**.

SMARTGUNLAWS.ORG

ABOUT THE LAW CENTER TO PREVENT GUN VIOLENCE

Founded in the wake of the July 1, 1993, assault weapon massacre at 101 California Street in San Francisco that left eight dead and six wounded, the Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence is now the premier resource for legal expertise and information regarding state and federal firearms laws. We track and analyze gun laws in all 50 states, file amicus briefs in Second Amendment cases across the country, and work with lawmakers and advocates to craft and promote legislation that will reduce gun violence and save lives. We regularly partner with law firms and nonprofit organizations dedicated to combating the epidemic of gun violence in our country, and we invite you to learn more about our work by visiting our website or connecting with us on social media.