



Bob Ferguson
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July 31, 2018

The Honorable Kim Wyman
ATTN: Jackie Wheeler
PO Box 40229
Olympia, WA 98504-0229

Re: Ballot Title and Explanatory Statement for Initiative 1639

Dear Secretary Wyman:

In accordance with RCW 29A.32.040 and RCW 29A.32.070, we supply herewith the Ballot Title and Explanatory Statement for Initiative 1639. The ballot title for Initiative 1639 was previously established by court order, and is repeated here solely for convenience of reference.

BALLOT TITLE

Statement of Subject: Initiative Measure No. 1639 concerns firearms.

Concise Description: This measure would require increased background checks, training, age limitations, and waiting periods for sales or delivery of semiautomatic assault rifles; criminalize noncompliant storage upon unauthorized use; allow fees; and enact other provisions.

Should this measure be enacted into law? Yes [] No []

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Law as It Presently Exists

Washington law requires background checks for the sale or transfer of firearms, with exceptions. This background check requirement applies to sales and transfers of firearms through firearms dealers, at gun shows, online, and between unlicensed private individuals. This requirement applies to most sales of firearms, as well as gifts or loans of firearms. The background check includes checking with federal and state agencies for criminal convictions, pending criminal charges or warrants, and certain mental health records.

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A sale or transfer of a firearm cannot take place if the background check shows that the buyer or recipient is legally ineligible to possess it. The sale or transfer of a firearm may be completed if the result of a background check is not received within 10 business days. That 10 day period is extended to 60 days if the buyer or recipient does not have a valid permanent Washington driver's license or state identification card, or has not lived in Washington for at least 90 days. It is a felony to deliver a firearm to any person reasonably believed to be prohibited from owning or possessing a firearm.

The delivery of a pistol may be restricted based on an outstanding warrant for a buyer's arrest or certain other charges or proceedings that might be pending against the buyer. Certain recordkeeping requirements apply to the sale of a pistol that do not apply to other types of firearms. A licensed firearm dealer must report to the state the buyer's name, address, and other information. The state maintains records of the sales of pistols. The state does not maintain records of other transfers or a registry of firearms. State law requires that an application for the purchase of a pistol contain a warning about the possibility of criminal prosecution for the illegal possession of firearms, and that state and federal laws regarding possession of firearms differ.

State law makes it illegal to possess some kinds of firearms. These include machine guns, short-barreled shotguns, and short-barreled rifles. Machine guns include firearms that do not require a separate trigger pull for each shot, and can store ammunition in a separable device such as a clip that can fire at the rate of five or more shots per second. There are exceptions to this prohibition.

State law prohibits certain people from possessing firearms. A person convicted of certain crimes or found not guilty by reason of insanity is ineligible to possess a firearm. The entry of a civil commitment order based on mental health also makes a person ineligible to possess a firearm. The entry of restraining orders for harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner or child may make a person ineligible to possess a firearm under some circumstances. Firearm rights can be restored under some circumstances.

People between the ages of 18 and 21 are generally allowed to possess a pistol only in their residence, their place of business, or property under their control. A person under age 18 is generally prohibited from possessing a firearm. State law allows a person under age 18 to possess a firearm only under limited circumstances. These exceptions include, among others: while attending a firearms safety course, while practicing or target shooting at an approved range, while competing in an organized competition, while hunting with a valid hunting license, or in certain instances with parental permission.

Residents of other states may purchase rifles and shotguns in Washington if they are eligible to possess such weapons under federal law and the laws of both Washington and the state in which they reside. Nonresidents are subject to the same background check requirements that apply to Washington residents.

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State law does not currently require firearms safety training to possess a firearm. Hunter safety training may be required to obtain a hunting license. State law does not specifically regulate firearms storage.

The Effect of the Proposed Measure if Approved

This measure would change state laws regarding firearms. Some of these changes would relate only to semiautomatic assault rifles, as defined. Other changes would apply to other types of firearms as well.

The initiative defines a “semiautomatic assault rifle” to mean:

any rifle which utilizes a portion of the energy of a firing cartridge to extract the fired cartridge case and chamber the next round, and which requires a separate pull of the trigger to fire each cartridge.

The initiative defines semiautomatic assault rifles not to include antique firearms, permanently inoperable firearms, or any firearm that is manually operated by bolt, pump, lever, or slide action.

This initiative would add new requirements for the purchase of a semiautomatic assault rifle. Buyers would be required to provide proof that they have completed a recognized firearm safety training program within the past five years. That training program must include instruction on:

- Basic firearms safety rules;
- Firearms and children, including secure gun storage and talking to children about gun safety;
- Firearms and suicide prevention;
- Secure gun storage to prevent unauthorized access and use;
- Safe handling of firearms; and
- State and federal firearms laws, including prohibited firearms transfers.

This initiative would make it illegal for a person under 21 years of age to buy a pistol or semiautomatic assault rifle. It would make it illegal for any person to sell or transfer a semiautomatic assault rifle to a person under age 21. The initiative would prohibit a person between the ages of 18 and 21 from possessing a semiautomatic assault rifle except in the person’s residence, fixed place of business, on real property under his or her control, or for other specified purposes.

The initiative would require a dealer to wait at least 10 days before delivering a semiautomatic assault rifle to a buyer. It would also prohibit anyone who is not a resident of Washington from buying a semiautomatic assault rifle in Washington.

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The initiative would change some laws that currently apply only to pistols and apply them to both pistols and semiautomatic assault rifles. These include restrictions on delivery when a buyer has an outstanding warrant for his or her arrest. This would also be true for situations in which certain charges or proceedings are pending. Background check and record keeping requirements that currently apply only to the purchase of pistols would also apply to the purchase of semiautomatic assault rifles. The same requirements for collecting and maintaining information on purchases of pistols would apply to purchases of semiautomatic assault rifles.

The initiative would require a new warning on application forms for the purchase of a pistol or semiautomatic assault rifle. This new warning would read:

CAUTION: The presence of a firearm in the home has been associated with an increased risk of suicide, death during domestic violence incidents, and unintentional deaths to children and others.

The initiative would allow the state to impose a fee of up to \$25 on each purchaser of a semiautomatic assault rifle. This fee would be used to offset certain costs of implementing the initiative. The fee would be adjusted for inflation.

The initiative would create new criminal offenses for the unsafe storage of a firearm if a person who cannot legally possess a firearm gets it and uses it in specified ways. These crimes would apply to a person who stores or leaves a firearm in a place where the person knows, or reasonably should know, that a prohibited person may gain access to the firearm. Failure to securely store a firearm would only be a crime if certain other events happen. A person who fails to securely store a firearm would be guilty of a felony if a person who is legally ineligible to possess a firearm uses it to cause personal injury or death. A person who fails to securely store a firearm would be guilty of a gross misdemeanor if a person who is legally ineligible to possess a firearm discharges it, uses it in a way that shows intent to intimidate someone or that warrants alarm for the safety of others, or uses the firearm in the commission of a crime.

The initiative would not mandate how or where a firearm must be stored. But it would provide that the crimes regarding unsecure storage would sometimes not apply. Those crimes would not apply if the firearm was in secure gun storage, meaning a locked box, gun safe, or other locked storage space that is designed to prevent unauthorized use or discharge of a firearm. The crimes also would not apply if the firearm was secured with a trigger lock or similar device that is designed to prevent the unauthorized use or discharge of the firearm. The crimes would not apply if the person who gets the firearm is ineligible to possess it because of age but the access is with parental permission and under adult supervision. The crimes would not apply in cases of self-defense. Finally, the crimes would not apply if the person who is ineligible to possess a firearm obtains it through unlawful entry, if the unauthorized access or theft is reported to law enforcement within five days of the time the victim knew or should have known that the firearm had been taken.

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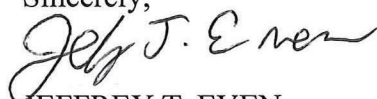
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The initiative would require every firearm dealer to offer to sell or give the purchaser or transferee of any firearm a secure gun storage device or trigger lock. It would also require every store, shop, or sales outlet where firearms are sold to post a warning sign advising buyers that they may face criminal prosecution if they store or leave an unsecured firearm where a person prohibited from possessing the firearm can get it. A similar written warning must be delivered to firearm buyers and transferees. Violation of these requirements would be a civil infraction.

Finally, the initiative would require the development of a cost-effective and efficient process to verify that people who have acquired pistols or semiautomatic assault rifles remain eligible to possess a firearm under state and federal law. This process would provide for notice to local chiefs of police and sheriffs to take steps to ensure that persons legally ineligible to possess firearms are not illegally in possession of firearms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeff T. Even".

JEFFREY T. EVEN

Deputy Solicitor General

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