

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 123

To authorize for a grant program for handgun licensing programs, and
for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 16, 2025

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, and Mr. BLUMENTHAL) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To authorize for a grant program for handgun licensing
programs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Handgun Permit to
5 Purchase Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds as follows:

8 (1) in 2023, gun violence claimed 46,728 lives,
9 marking the third-highest number of gun-related

1 deaths ever recorded in the United States in a single
2 year.

3 (2) Between 2018 and 2022, approximately 90
4 percent of the firearm violence committed in the
5 United States for which a firearm type was specified
6 involved a handgun.

7 (3) During the 5-year period described in para-
8 graph (2), 35,959 people in the United States were
9 killed with a handgun.

10 (4) Research by top national experts shows
11 that—

12 (A) the adoption of handgun purchaser li-
13 censing laws is associated with significant re-
14 ductions in firearm-related homicides; and

15 (B) the repeal of handgun purchaser li-
16 censing laws is associated with significant in-
17 creases in firearm-related homicides.

18 (5) Research on the effects of the adoption of
19 a handgun purchaser licensing law in Connecticut in
20 1995 showed—

21 (A) a 27.8-percent reduction in the rate of
22 firearm homicide; and

23 (B) a 32.8-percent reduction in firearm
24 suicide rates.

1 (6) Published research has shown that the re-
2 peal of a handgun purchaser licensing law in Mis-
3 souri in 2007 was associated with—

4 (A) a 47.3-percent increase in the rate of
5 firearm homicide; and

6 (B) a 23.5-percent increase in firearm sui-
7 cide rates.

8 (7) Research on the impact of the adoption of
9 a handgun purchaser licensing law in Maryland in
10 2013 found—

11 (A) that the adoption was associated with
12 an 82-percent reduction in the Baltimore Police
13 Department’s recovery of handguns with key in-
14 dications of diversion for criminal use; and

15 (B) that 41 percent of prohibited pur-
16 chasers surveyed in Baltimore reported greater
17 difficulty in obtaining a handgun.

18 (8) Research on the effects of firearm pur-
19 chaser licensing laws throughout 3 decades found
20 that—

21 (A) in urban counties between 1984 and
22 2015, firearm purchaser licensing laws were as-
23 sociated with an 11 percent reduction in fire-
24 arm homicides; and

1 (B) between 1984 and 2017, States with
2 strong firearm purchaser licensing laws were
3 associated with 56 percent lower rates of fatal
4 mass shooting incidents and 67 percent fewer
5 mass shooting victims.

6 (9) In States that have had effective handgun
7 purchaser licensing laws for decades, such as Con-
8 necticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York,
9 the vast majority of firearms traced to crimes origi-
10 nated in States that do not have handgun purchaser
11 licensing laws, which supports the need for handgun
12 purchaser licensing laws in every State.

13 (10) Research has shown that States with
14 handgun purchaser licensing laws export far fewer
15 firearms for criminal use in other States than States
16 that lack handgun purchaser licensing laws.

17 (11) On January 13, 2025, the Supreme Court
18 of the United States declined to hear a challenge to
19 Maryland's handgun licensing law, allowing the rul-
20 ing of the United States Court of Appeals for the
21 Fourth Circuit, which upheld the constitutionality of
22 the law, to stand.

1 **SEC. 3. GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED FOR HANDGUN LI-**
 2 **CENSING.**

3 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title I of the Omnibus Crime
 4 Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10101
 5 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

6 **“PART PP—HANDGUN LICENSING GRANT**
 7 **PROGRAM**

8 **“SEC. 3061. DEFINITION.**

9 “In this part, the term ‘handgun’ has the meaning
 10 given the term in section 921(a) of title 18, United States
 11 Code.

12 **“SEC. 3062. GRANT PROGRAM.**

13 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Attorney General may
 14 award grants to States, units of local government, and In-
 15 dian tribes for the development, implementation, and eval-
 16 uation of handgun purchaser licensing requirements.

17 “(b) PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.—From the amounts
 18 appropriated to carry out this part, and not later than
 19 90 days after such amounts are appropriated, the Attor-
 20 ney General shall award grants, on a competitive basis,
 21 to eligible applicants whose applications are approved
 22 under subsection (c) to assist such applicants in imple-
 23 menting and improving handgun purchaser licensing pro-
 24 grams.

25 “(c) APPLICATION.—To be eligible to receive a grant
 26 under this part, a State, unit of local government, or In-

1 dian tribe shall submit to the Attorney General an applica-
 2 tion at such time, in such manner, and containing such
 3 information as the Attorney General may require, includ-
 4 ing—

5 “(1) a description of the law that the applicant
 6 has enacted to require a license for any purchase of
 7 a handgun, including a description of any exemp-
 8 tions to such law; and

9 “(2) a description of how the applicant will use
 10 the grant to carry out or improve its handgun pur-
 11 chaser licensing program.

12 “(d) ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.—To be eligible
 13 for a grant under this part, an applicant shall have in ef-
 14 fect a handgun purchaser licensing law that includes the
 15 following requirements:

16 “(1) With respect to an individual applying for
 17 a handgun license or permit—

18 “(A) the individual shall be—

19 “(i) not less than 21 years old; and

20 “(ii) a citizen or national of the
 21 United States or an alien lawfully admitted
 22 for permanent residence (as those terms
 23 are defined in section 101(a) of the Immi-
 24 gration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C.
 25 1101(a)));

1 “(B) the individual shall apply for the
2 handgun purchaser license or permit at a law
3 enforcement agency in the State in which the
4 individual resides;

5 “(C) the individual shall reapply for the
6 handgun purchaser license or permit after a pe-
7 riod not longer than 5 years; and

8 “(D) the individual shall, in connection
9 with the application for the handgun purchaser
10 license or permit—

11 “(i) submit to a background investiga-
12 tion and a criminal history check, as estab-
13 lished by the State, which shall ensure, at
14 a minimum, that the individual is not pro-
15 hibited from possessing a firearm under
16 section 922(g) of title 18, United States
17 Code; and

18 “(ii) submit fingerprints and photo-
19 graphs.

20 “(2) An individual who is prohibited from pos-
21 sessing a firearm under section 922(g) of title 18,
22 United States Code, may not be issued a handgun
23 purchasing license or permit.

1 “(e) USE OF FUNDS.—Grant funds awarded under
2 this part shall be used to improve the handgun purchaser
3 licensing program of the grant recipient.”.

4 (b) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—Section
5 1001(a) of title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe
6 Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10261(a)) is amended by
7 adding at the end the following:

8 “(29) There are authorized to be appropriated such
9 sums as may be necessary to carry out part PP.”.

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