



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WASHINGTON

Empowering all Washingtonians to engage in a more responsible and responsive democracy

## 2018 ISSUE PAPER – GUN SAFETY

### **Current Status of Gun Safety Issues in Washington:**

Recent progress on gun safety issues in Washington has come about through the initiative process and in 2017 with one significant bill passed with bipartisan support.

With the passage of **Initiative 1491** (Extreme Risk Protection Orders) in 2016, law enforcement can remove weapons from individuals in danger of harming themselves or others upon a court granting an Extreme Risk Protection Order on behalf of a family or household member. Suicides in Washington now account for 78% of gun deaths.

**Initiative 594**, which passed by a wide margin in 2014, closed a gaping loophole in the background check process. Now all gun purchases, regardless of whether they were made at a licensed dealer, gun show, or private transaction, must go through the federal background check process at a licensed gun dealer place of business.

The 2017 Legislative Session strengthened I-594 by requiring law enforcement to follow up with persons who failed the background check and to notify persons who hold a protection order against a person prohibited from purchasing a firearm.

For a comprehensive summary of Washington gun laws, go to [leg.wa.gov](http://leg.wa.gov), then to House Judiciary Committee, November 17, 2017, and look in Committee Documents.

### **Outlook for the 2018 Legislative Session:**

The Attorney General will continue to support legislation to prohibit the sale of military assault-style weapons and large capacity magazines. However, more likely to pass are changing the requirements for purchase of an assault-style weapon and a ban on bump stocks. Currently, a weapon such as the AR-15 can be legally purchased by an 18-year-old even though a pistol requires a purchaser to be 21 and to complete the concealed weapon permit process.

Preventing access to weapons, including safe storage, by children and prohibited persons is likely to be refiled. HB 1122 received a hearing in 2017 but did not reach the floor for a vote.

Other measures would allow seized weapons to be destroyed and not sold or auctioned. The cities of Seattle and Edmonds now require that stolen guns be reported to law enforcement, but this is not part of state statute.

**League Positions on Gun Control (1994):** The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

**GC-1:** Government should regulate ownership and possession of firearms and limit their accessibility.

**GC-2:** Firearms should be regulated by government through measures which may include the following:

Federal: applications to purchase; registration, manufacturers' and dealers' license fees, restrictions on owning, transporting and distributing; prohibition on types and places allowed, extended waiting periods (as consistent with LWVUS Gun Control position).

**GC-3:** Taxes and license fees should be increased to help pay for: Education about firearm safety; Background and verification checks for gun purchasers; Violence prevention programs and measures; Investigation and prosecution of illegal trafficking in firearms.

**GC-4** Measures should be taken to limit young people's access to firearms. These should include the following: Gun-free zones in school areas; An age limit of 18 for the use and possession of guns; Requirements for safe gun storage.

**GC-5:** Civil and criminal parental liability under certain circumstances.

**US Constitution:** Second Amendment—A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

**Washington State Constitution:** Section 24 Right to Bear Arms – The right of the individual citizen to bear arms in defense of himself, or the state, shall not be impaired, but nothing in this section shall be construed as authorizing individuals or corporations to organize, maintain or employ an armed body of men.

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