

2019 ISSUE PAPER: GUN SAFETY

Position statement

The League of Women Voters of Washington believes that:

- Government should regulate ownership and possession of firearms and limit their accessibility.
- 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 LWWVUS Gun Control position).
- 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.
- 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
- Civil and criminal parental liability under certain circumstances

Recent progress on gun safety issues in Washington has come about through the initiative as opposed to the legislative process as both houses of the Washington legislature have not supported legislative measures. While the House has moved legislation, the Senate has often been reluctant to schedule hearings.

Suicides in Washington now account for over 70% of gun deaths. The legislature has taken action with some voluntary educational measures aimed at gun dealers. With passage of Initiative 1491 in 2016, law enforcement is able to remove weapons from individuals in danger of harming themselves or others after family or household members are granted an Extreme Risk Protection Order by a judge.

Initiative 594, which passed by a wide margin in 2014, closed a gaping loophole in the background check process. All gun purchases must now go through the federal background check process regardless of whether they were made at a licensed dealer, gun show, or private transaction. The 2018 Legislature passed a ban on bump stocks as well.

Summary of Issues for the 2019 Legislative Session

With the anticipated passage of Initiative 1639 in November 2018, Washington State will have some of the most effective gun safety measures. The age for purchasing an assault-style weapon will increase from 18 to 21. The law will bring assault weapons to the same standards currently required for handguns. The measure requires an enhanced local law enforcement background check, a waiting period, and safety training. The initiative also incentivizes safe storage by requiring gun dealers to offer safe storage devices, post warnings about the dangers of weapons in the home. Gun owners who allow unsecured firearms to fall into the hands of prohibited individuals and are used to injure others may be subjected to criminal or civil penalties.

Cities and counties are also passing legislation to require gun owners to secure their guns. Seattle and King County passed legislation this summer but may be challenged in court by the NRA and Second Amendment Foundation.

LWVWA will continue to work with the Alliance for Gun Responsibility and Washington CeaseFire.

If I-1639 passes, LWVWA priorities will have been fulfilled. Legislation to ban 3-D printed weapons will need to be done on a federal level.

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