



2020 ISSUE PAPER: GUN SAFETY

Position Statement

Government should regulate ownership and possession of firearms and limit their accessibility. Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

The 2019 session made significant progress on gun safety issues, including changes in Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPO) extending them to minors and restrictions/bans on so-called “ghost guns” that cannot be traced by law enforcement.

Summary of Issues for the 2020 Legislative Session

However, the legislature did not take action to restrict the size of ammunition magazines, despite the bills’ passage by both house and senate committees. Washington has no regulations on ammunition, unlike California which now requires a background check to purchase ammunition. Passing the restriction on magazine size and on ammunition is a priority for the upcoming session, especially after recent mass shootings in Texas and Ohio.

A bill to add childcare facilities, parks and libraries to gun-free zones will be reintroduced though parks and libraries may be deleted.

Tightening up and standardizing concealed pistol permits is long overdue. Currently each county or city has its own permit format. Also, current law says that the issuing government “shall” issue the license. Changing “shall” to “may” will give law enforcement the authority to withhold issuing a license when serious questions are raised regarding the applicant. The legislature is also likely to consider requiring completion of safety training before issuing a license.

Long overdue is a statewide requirement to report lost or stolen weapons to law enforcement. Several cities and counties have enacted this to alert law enforcement to guns that are likely to be used in criminal activity. LWVWA supports all of these measures. Suicide remains a top concern as over 70% of gun deaths in the state are due to suicide.

For an up-to-date summary of Washington gun laws, go to: leg.wa.gov and download the summary from the Senate Law and Justice Committee.

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