

Testimony on SB 224/HB 543

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“A fanatic is one who can’t change his mind and won’t change the subject.”
--Winston Churchill

We Oppose this bill and ask it be reported unfavorably. This bill is virtually indistinguishable from SB223.

It reveals Maryland’s desire to treat ALL gun owners like the criminals the legislature has always considered them to be. With the hoops the bill imposed on gun buyers, they will spend almost as much time in state custody (being fingerprinted, submitting oaths, filling out applications, ...) as Maryland requires for violent criminals. **Criminals will get their fingerprinting free, however.**

It passage would permit the state to label a person as having a tendency to instability and disqualify them from purchasing firearms. No measures or characteristics are defined by this law to regulate how this instability or propensity for violence will be established. This proposition demonstrates left-wing (Soviet Union style) authoritarianism survives in Maryland.

It would completely eliminate any idea that a decent citizen has the RIGHT to buy a regulated firearm and it creates a charge fee that citizens must pay for the privilege of buying a gun.

It declares war on Maryland gun owners, on the Constitution of Maryland and the United States, and Marylander gun owners will become, in the eyes of their state government, a group of suspects.

It implements a firearms purchaser ID card like Illinois, and like Illinois, this exercise will do nothing for public safety. Its passage will help the state to harass gun owners, but it might be simpler to make law-abiding gun owners wear a scarlet G on their breast.

It serves to disarm the honest and empower the criminal. It manifests the idea that guns are dangerous and implies that it is better to let some lowlife steal your property and beat you half to death than it is to keep the means to protect your family.

It adds complications associated with revocation of driver’s licenses and/or revocation of gun purchase permit and may add complications associated with the loss of privacy in obtaining automobile insurance.

Firearm prohibitionists and the sponsors of this bill believe criminality is inherent in any who owns, or desires to own, a gun. Such beliefs display a remarkable lack of knowledge concerning the people who legally use firearms in Maryland. Prohibitionists live in a state of denial about the value of guns. Their hatred -- actually a phobia -- stems not from a desire to stunt the growth of crime, but from a social agenda that includes disarming most individual Americans. **"Citizen control" and not "crime control" appears to drive the demand for this restrictive bill and its measures are all for the control of law-abiding gun owners, not crime and not criminals.**

Every type of "gun control" has been attempted somewhere, sometime - from waiting periods, registration and prohibitive licensing, to outright prohibition. **The Maryland government has never identified any effect between a restriction and the amount of crime controlled, or undertaken even the most rudimentary cost-benefit analysis of the effect their gun legislation has on the social fabric of this state.**

Were Maryland to do an honest study of gun restrictions, they would likely find all their “common sense” controls produced a perverse result of more crime and violence. In the most extreme case of gun control, Great Britain has banned legal ownership of handguns. Since that ban, criminal handgun usage has exploded. There is now a thriving criminal market for handguns that are smuggled from eastern Europe or manufactured in local illegal gun shops that drug gangs have established. For more information

see **Detectives smash big gun running operation**, Nick Hopkins, March 22, 2001, **The Guardian** for a report on smuggling and criminal work shops supplying illegal firearms including machine guns. **One in three young criminals is armed**, Tony Thompson, September 3, 2000, **The Observer** is another article whose title makes clear the situation developing in Britain despite the handgun ban. The government in Britain estimates there are 3 million illegal firearms now available to criminals according to **The Observer** article. Guns are now so frequently used by criminals in Britain that sales of bullet proof vests have quadrupled in the last two years.

Even the centerpiece of American gun-phobic true-believers, the Brady Bill, has been discredited as having any impact on crime. The figure shows a part of the article published in the Journal of the Am. Medical Assoc., vol. 284#5 giving that conclusion.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the JAMA website with links for 'JOURNALS OF THE AMA', 'JERKMAN', and 'SITE MAP'. Below the navigation bar are icons for 'CURRENT ISSUE', 'INDEXES', and 'PAST ISSUES'. The article title is 'Homicide and Suicide Rates Associated With Implementation of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act'. The authors are listed as 'Jens Ludwig, PhD; Philip J. Cook, PhD'. The 'Context' section states that in February 1994, the Brady Act established a nationwide requirement for licensed firearms dealers to observe a waiting period and initiate a background check for handgun sales. The 'Objective' is to determine if the Brady Act was associated with reductions in homicide and suicide rates. The 'Design and Setting' is an analysis of vital statistics data from 1985 to 1997. The 'Main Outcome Measures' include total and firearm homicide and suicide rates per 100,000 adults. The 'Results' section indicates that changes in rates were not significantly different, except for a reduction in suicides for persons aged 55 years or older.

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This bill makes no sense from a practical viewpoint – **it will not lower violent crime and likely will raise it.**

The bill will divert resources from real crime fighting activities chasing license violators that are not committing anti-social violent crimes. You'd think the Maryland Legislature would rather spend money processing the thousands of "rape kits" it has been neglecting so as to avoid the embarrassment of a news network showing Maryland the value of doing so.

As for whether the bill will garner any political advantage for its sponsors, we recommend consulting with Used-To-Be-Next-President of the United States, Al Gore. I'm sure he can give you better political advice than we at MCDL. We do note, with a bit of glee, that Democrats in other states are trying really hard to shake their anti-gun image. The Washington Times article **Shot in the Foot**, page A7, 2/27/02 quotes Montana state Democratic Party Chairman Bob Ream, "We're going to get clobbered if we don't improve our image." While we know Maryland is not Montana, we will insure the good gun owners of Montana

are fully informed about the Democratic Party anti-gun antics here.

The police know and this legislature should know that most victims of homicide in Baltimore have criminal records and those records are mostly drug related (see: Most Baltimore murder victims have criminal records, John Biemer, ASSOCIATED PRESS, 12/18/2001). According to Baltimore Detective Gordon Carew "Almost every one of these people had a criminal record. That's a fact," Since Baltimore accounts for most of Maryland's homicides each year, it is fair to say most homicide victims in Maryland have criminal records. These people are engaged in risky activity. It appears that the sponsors of this bill want to make these criminal activities safer at the expense of freedom.

What a stupid trade-off . . .