



FIREARM PURCHASER LICENSES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A firearm purchaser license is a government-issued credential that a person must obtain before they can legally purchase or otherwise take possession of a firearm. The purpose of such license is to enhance the background check process; reduce firearm-related homicides, suicides, and injuries; limit firearm trafficking; and, promote firearm safety and training. However, concerns have been raised that firearm purchaser licenses may infringe on Second Amendment rights, place additional burdens on lawful firearm purchasers, lead to the creation of a centralized firearm owner database, and have limited impact on individuals who acquire firearms through illegal transactions.

Virginia does not require a firearm purchaser license as a prerequisite to purchasing or taking possession of a firearm. As of November 2025, 14 states and Washington, D.C., have enacted such requirements and these laws vary significantly. In August 2024, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit upheld Maryland's firearm purchaser license law against a Second Amendment challenge, and the United States Supreme Court later declined to review that decision.

Research on whether firearm purchaser license laws reduce firearm-related homicides and suicides is mixed. Furthermore, data on firearm use in homicides and suicides varies across states that have implemented such laws. However, research suggests that firearm purchaser license laws may reduce firearm trafficking.

Implementing and administering a firearm purchaser license program requires significant resources. Such resources depend on the components of the law, but may include funding for staffing, technology systems, application and monitoring processes, curriculum development and certification of instructors for a firearm safety course, and litigation of license denials and revocations.

Ultimately, enacting a firearm purchaser license law is a policy decision. Virginia could enact such a law or, if resource challenges or other logistical concerns exist, could enact certain components of a license, such as a firearm safety course prior to a purchase, a waiting period to take possession of a firearm, or fingerprinting as part of the background check process for a firearm transaction.

BACKGROUND & METHODOLOGY

During the 2024 Regular Session of the General Assembly, legislation to create a firearm purchaser license in Virginia (House Bill 1424) was referred to the Virginia State Crime Commission ("Crime Commission") by the House Committee on Public Safety.⁴³ Identical legislation (Senate Bill 1109) was also referred to the Crime Commission during the 2025 Regular Session by the Senate Courts of Justice

⁴³ House Bill 1424 (2024 Regular Session). <https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?ses=241&typ=bil&val=hb1424>.

Committee.⁴⁴ The Executive Committee of the Crime Commission directed staff to conduct a comprehensive study of firearm purchaser licenses, including their use, components, and effectiveness, as well as the feasibility of implementing such a license in Virginia. Crime Commission staff engaged in the following activities as part of this study:

- Reviewed relevant literature on the use and effectiveness of firearm purchaser licenses;
- Collected and analyzed data on firearm-related homicides and suicides;
- Examined firearm purchaser license laws in other states and Washington, D.C.;
- Identified relevant Second Amendment case law on firearm purchaser licensing;
- Met with officials from Maryland and Massachusetts regarding their firearm purchaser licensing processes;
- Gathered information on the potential costs associated with implementing and administering a firearm purchaser license program;
- Consulted with practitioners, stakeholders, and advocates;⁴⁵
- Attended a *Congressional Briefing on Preventing Gun Violence* presented by the George Mason University Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy;⁴⁶ and,
- Requested other agencies to provide presentations on firearm-related deaths, transactions, and violence prevention measures at the November Crime Commission meeting.⁴⁷

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FIREARM PURCHASER LICENSES

Answers to common questions about firearm purchaser licenses are organized into four sections. The first provides an overview of firearm purchaser licenses and their purpose. The second provides a legal overview of firearm purchaser license laws and their components in other states and Washington, D.C. The third synthesizes research examining the effect of firearm purchaser license laws on firearm-related violence. The fourth addresses resource and policy considerations associated with implementing and administering a firearm purchaser license program in Virginia.

⁴⁴ Senate Bill 1109 (2025 Regular Session). <https://lis.virginia.gov/bill-details/20251/SB1109>.

⁴⁵ Staff consulted with Everytown for Gun Safety, Giffords, Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions, National Shooting Sports Foundation, Office of the Attorney General of Virginia, Virginia Center for Public Safety, Virginia Citizens Defense League, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, Virginia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and Virginia State Police.

⁴⁶ Duran, P. George Mason University. (2025, April 21). *Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy shares gun violence research at Congressional briefing*. <https://content.sitemasonry.gmu.edu/news/2025-04/center-evidence-based-crime-policy-shares-gun-violence-research-congressional-briefing>.

⁴⁷ Yerkes, L. Virginia Department of Health. (2025, November 19). *At a glance: Data on firearm injuries among Virginians*. <https://vscc.virginia.gov/2025/Nov19VSCCMtg/At%20a%20Glance%20-%20Data%20on%20Firearms%20Injuries%20among%20Virginians%20-%20VSCC%20Mtg%2011-19-25.pdf>. Hobron, R. Virginia Department of Health. (2025, November 19). *Gun-related deaths in Virginia*. <https://vscc.virginia.gov/2025/Nov19VSCCMtg/Gun%20Related%20Deaths%20in%20Virginia%20-%20VSCC%20Mtg%2011-19-25.pdf>. Virginia State Police. (2025, November 19). *Firearms Transaction Center*. <https://vscc.virginia.gov/2025/Nov19VSCCMtg/Firearms%20Transaction%20Center%20-%20VSCC%20Mtg%2011-19-25.pdf>. Office of the Attorney General. (2025, November 19). *Operation Ceasefire*. <https://vscc.virginia.gov/2025/Nov19VSCCMtg/Operation%20Ceasefire%20-%20VSCC%20Mtg%2011-19-25.pdf>.

Overview of Firearm Purchaser Licenses

What is a firearm purchaser license?

A firearm purchaser license is a government-issued credential that a person must obtain before they can legally purchase or otherwise take possession of a firearm.⁴⁸

What is the purpose of a firearm purchaser license?

The purpose of a firearm purchaser license is to enhance the background check process; reduce firearm-related homicides, suicides, and injuries; limit firearm trafficking; and, promote firearm safety and training.⁴⁹

Is a firearm purchaser license the same as a concealed carry permit?

No. A firearm purchaser license is distinct from a concealed carry permit.⁵⁰ A concealed carry permit authorizes an individual to carry a concealed weapon in public; whereas, a firearm purchaser license authorizes an individual to lawfully purchase or take possession of a firearm.⁵¹ Some states that have implemented a firearm purchaser license program allow concealed carry permit holders to purchase firearms using their concealed carry permit in lieu of a firearm purchaser license, or to use their active concealed carry permit if their firearm purchaser license is expired.⁵²

What concerns exist about requiring a firearm purchaser license?

Concerns have been raised that requiring a firearm purchaser license may infringe on Second Amendment rights, place additional burdens on lawful firearm purchasers, lead to the creation of a centralized database of firearm owners, and have limited impact on individuals who acquire firearms through illegal transactions.⁵³

In addition, some components of a firearm purchaser license law could run counter to measures Virginia recently enacted to reduce the disproportionate impacts of such laws on certain communities. For example, legislation was enacted to address the burden of court fines and costs on individuals who may struggle to afford such payments;⁵⁴ whereas, a firearm purchaser license may impose additional expenses on persons seeking to lawfully purchase a firearm (e.g., application fees, fingerprinting, and

⁴⁸ See Villareal, S., Crifasi, C., Swanson, J., Barnhorst, A., Frattaroli, S., Washington, S.C., Bonnie, R., Roskam, K., Horwitz, J., & Chavis, K. (2025). *Firearm purchaser licensing: Research evidence to inform state policy*. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2025-03/FPL-research-evidence-to-inform-state-policy.pdf>. See also Giffords Law Center. *Licensing*. <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/owner-responsibilities/licensing/>. See also Everytown for Gun Safety. (2026). *Which states require background checks and/or permits to purchase handguns?* <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/law/background-check-and-or-purchase-permit/>.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ See Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-308.02 et seq. (2025).

⁵¹ See Villareal, S., Crifasi, C., Swanson, J., Barnhorst, A., Frattaroli, S., Washington, S.C., Bonnie, R., Roskam, K., Horwitz, J., & Chavis, K. (2025). *Firearm purchaser licensing: Research evidence to inform state policy*. <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2025-03/FPL-research-evidence-to-inform-state-policy.pdf>.

⁵² See Appendix B.

⁵³ Virginia Citizens Defense League, personal communication, July 14, 2025. See also NRA – Institute for Legislative Action. *Why gun control doesn't work*. <https://www.nra.org/why-gun-control-doesn-t-work/>. (Retrieved 2026, March 26).

⁵⁴ See 2021 Va. Acts ch. 336, Sp. Sess. I. (Issuance of a restricted drivers permit). Senate Bill 1262. <https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+sum+SB1262>. See also 2021 Va. Acts ch. 388, Sp. Sess. I. (Accrual of interest on fines and costs; deferral or installment payment agreements). House Bill 1895. <https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?212+sum+HB1895>.

firearms safety course). Similarly, legislation was enacted to limit law enforcement contact with members of historically over-policed communities;⁵⁵ however, such individuals could be required to have in-person contact with law enforcement as part of the application process to obtain a firearm purchaser license.

How are background checks for firearm transactions conducted in Virginia?

Virginia is a point of contact state for all firearm transactions, meaning federally licensed firearms dealers contact the Virginia State Police, rather than the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to conduct background checks using both state and federal databases.⁵⁶ If a person passes the Virginia State Police background check, the person may immediately take possession of the firearm.

Does a firearm purchaser license replace a background check at the point of sale?

This practice varies among states with firearm purchaser licenses. Depending on the structure of the licensing system, a firearm purchaser license may supplement or replace a background check at the point of sale or transfer. In some states, both a firearm purchaser license and a background check are required at the point of sale or transfer, while in others, a firearm purchaser license may satisfy federal background check requirements.⁵⁷

Legal Review of Firearm Purchaser License Laws in the United States

How many states currently have firearm purchaser license laws?

As shown in Map 1, 14 states and Washington, D.C., have laws requiring a firearm purchaser license (as of November 2025).⁵⁸ Of these, 11 states and Washington, D.C., have active firearm purchaser license laws; whereas, the remaining 3 states enacted firearm purchaser license legislation which has not yet taken effect.⁵⁹ See Appendix A for a table of state firearm purchaser license laws.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ See 2021 Va. Acts ch. 45 and 51, Sp. Sess. I. (Limiting traffic stops for certain infractions and prohibiting searches solely based on the odor of marijuana). House Bill 5058. <https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?202+sum+HB5058>. Senate Bill 5029. <https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?202+sum+SB5029>.

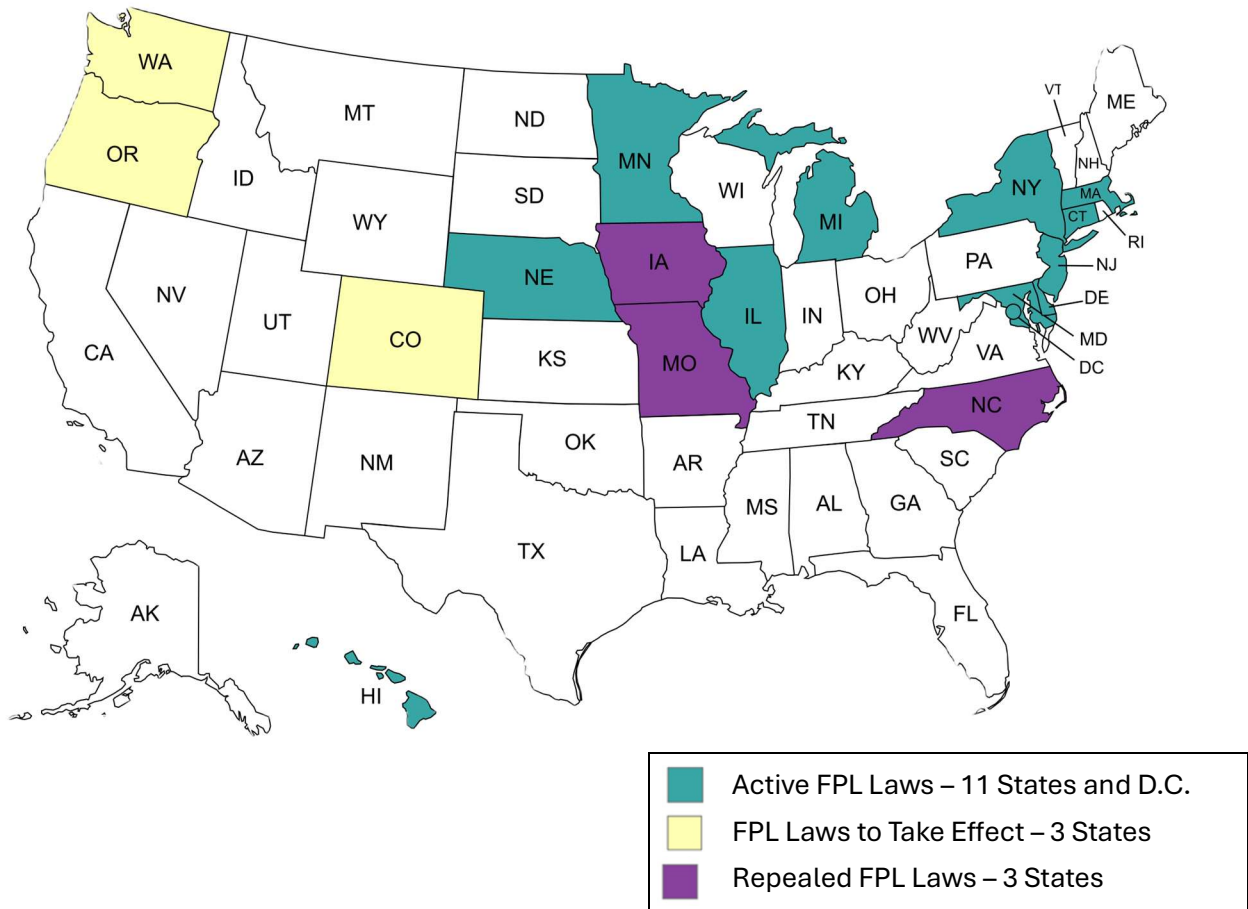
⁵⁶ See Virginia State Police. *Virginia Firearms Transaction Program*. <https://vsp.virginia.gov/services/firearms/virginia-firearms-transaction-program/>. See also Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. *Brady state lists*. <https://www.atf.gov/rules-and-regulations/laws-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and-explosives/gun-control-act/brady-law/brady-state-lists>.

⁵⁷ See 18 U.S.C. § 922(t)(3)(A) (2025). See also Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. *Brady permit chart*. <https://www.atf.gov/rules-and-regulations/laws-alcohol-tobacco-firearms-and-explosives/gun-control-act/brady-law/brady-permit-chart>.

⁵⁸ See Appendix A.

⁵⁹ *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Id.*

Map 1: Firearm Purchaser License (FPL) Laws in the United States

Source: Map prepared by Crime Commission staff based on legal analysis as of November 2025.

Are firearm purchaser license laws similar across states?

No. The components of firearm purchaser license laws vary significantly across states, such as:

- Type of firearm (e.g., handgun, assault rifle, all firearms);
- Issuing agency (e.g., state or local agency);
- Application fee (e.g., ranges from no fee up to \$100, fee determined by issuing agency);
- Whether fingerprints and/or a photograph are required as part of the application process;
- Whether an applicant must appear in-person before law enforcement at some point during the application process;
- Whether completion of a firearm safety course is required prior to issuance, as well as whether that course must include live fire instruction;
- Time frame within which an agency must issue or deny a license application (e.g., 3 days to 180 days, or no specified time period);
- Whether subjective risk factors are considered in addition to objective disqualifying criteria when determining whether to issue a license (e.g., the applicant generally being a danger to

themselves or the community versus specific conviction(s) for disqualifying criminal offenses or mental health commitments);

- Duration for which a license remains valid once issued (e.g., 30 days to 10 years);
- Appeal process following the denial or revocation of a license; and,
- Whether a law enforcement agency is required to take steps to remove firearms from a person's possession following revocation of their license.

Appendix B provides a more comprehensive breakdown of variations in firearm purchaser license components across states (as of November 2025).

Have any courts with jurisdiction in Virginia ruled on whether a firearm purchaser license law violates the Second Amendment?

Yes. The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, which includes Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia, recently upheld Maryland's firearm purchaser license law against a Second Amendment challenge. In its August 2024 decision of *Maryland Shall Issue, Inc. v. Moore*, 116 F.4th 211, the Court of Appeals found that the plaintiffs had not rebutted the presumed constitutionality of Maryland's "shall issue" firearm purchaser license law. The United States Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal of this decision in January 2025.⁶¹

Accordingly, a firearm purchaser license law in Virginia would not likely violate the Second Amendment under current federal case law, so long as the Virginia legislation is structured similarly to the Maryland statute.

Effect of Firearm Purchaser License Laws on Firearm-Related Violence

What effect do firearm purchaser license laws have on firearm-related violence?

Research examining firearm purchaser license laws has primarily focused on whether such laws have an impact in (i) reducing firearm-related homicide rates, (ii) reducing firearm-related suicide rates, or (iii) reducing the trafficking of firearms within and across states lines. In sum, research on whether firearm purchaser license laws reduce firearm-related homicides and suicides is mixed. Furthermore, data on firearm use in homicides and suicides varies across states that have implemented such laws.⁶² However, research suggests that firearm purchaser license laws may reduce firearm trafficking.

Research examining the impact of firearm purchaser license laws on firearm-related violence is mixed. Research consistently acknowledges the difficulty of isolating the specific effects of these laws on reductions in firearm violence.⁶³ There are a number of other factors that must be considered alongside

⁶¹ *Maryland Shall Issue, Inc. v. Moore*, 145 S.Ct. 1049 (Jan. 13, 2025).

⁶² See Appendices C and D.

⁶³ See, e.g., Chien, L. C., Holloway, A., Gakh, M., & Coughenour, C. (2022). A novel gun law strength index and influential state gun laws for firearm homicide in the United States, 1999-2018. *Public Health*, 210, 91-98; Siegel, M., Pahn, M., Xuan, Z., Fleeger, E., & Hemenway, D. (2021). The impact of state firearm laws on homicide and suicide deaths in the USA, 1991-2016: A panel study. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 34(10), 2021-2028.

implementation, including the specific law(s) examined, study length, and data analysis methods.⁶⁴ In addition, it is difficult to accurately isolate the impact of firearm purchaser license laws because such laws often operate in conjunction with other laws that may have been enacted before, after, or coinciding with the implementation of the firearm purchaser license law. For example, Missouri repealed its firearm purchaser license law while also implementing a “Stand Your Ground” law,⁶⁵ and Connecticut implemented a firearm purchaser license law while simultaneously raising the minimum age to purchase a handgun and imposing an eight-hour gun safety training requirement.⁶⁶

Legal changes also interact with pre-existing, existing, or changing societal factors, such as demographics, population density, educational attainment, incarceration rates, healthcare access, and poverty rates, amongst other factors.⁶⁷ In addition, components of firearm purchaser license laws vary across the states, such as the type of firearm for which a license is required, issuing agencies, fingerprinting requirements, and safety course requirements. Research findings may also differ based on methodological factors, such as sample size (number of states examined), study timeframes, potential selection bias, control and/or confounding variables, and specific outcome measures (e.g., homicide, suicide, etc.).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Chien, L. C., Holloway, A., Gakh, M., & Coughenour, C. (2022). A novel gun law strength index and influential state gun laws for firearm homicide in the United States, 1999-2018. *Public Health*, 210, 91-98; Santaella-Tenorio, J., Cerdá, M., Villaveces, A., & Galea, S. (2016). What do we know about the association between firearm legislation and firearm-related injuries. *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 38(1), 140-157.

⁶⁵ Crifasi, C.K. Meyers, J. S., Vernick, J. S., & Webster, D. W. (2015). Effects of changes in permit-to-purchase handgun laws in Connecticut and Missouri on suicide rates. *Preventive Medicine*, 79, 43-49; Webster, D., Crifasi, C. K., & Vernick, J. S. (2014). Effects of the repeal of Missouri’s handgun purchaser license laws on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 91(2), 293-302; Webster, D., Crifasi, C. K., & Vernick, J. S. (2014). Erratum to: Effects of the repeal of Missouri’s handgun purchaser license law on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health*, 91(3), 598-601.

⁶⁶ RAND. (2024). *The effects of license and permitting requirements*.

<https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/license-to-own.html#summary-of-evidence-for-how-li->

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Fleegler, E.W., Lee, L.K., Monuteaux, M. C., Hemenway, D., & Mannix, R. (2013). Firearm legislation and firearm-related fatalities in the United States. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 173, 732-740; Knopov, A., Siegel, M., Ziming, X., Rothman, E. F., Cronin, S. W., Hemenway, D. (2019). The impact of state firearm laws on homicide rates among Black and White populations in the United States, 1991-2016. *Health and Social Work*, 44(4), 232-240; Sumner, S. A., Layde, P. M., & Guse, C. E. (2008). Firearm death rates and association with level of firearm purchase background check. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 35, 1-6.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., Bhatt, A., Wang, X., Cheng, A., Morris, K., Beyer, L., Chestnut, A., Steigerwalt, K., & Metzner, J. (2020). Association of changes in Missouri firearm laws with adolescent and young adult suicides by firearms. *JAMA Network Open*, 3(11), e2024303; Crifasi, C. K., Merrill-Francis, M., McCourt, A., Vernick, J. S., Wintemute, G. K., & Webster, D. W. (2018). Correction to: Association between firearm laws and homicide in urban counties. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95, 773-776; Crifasi, C.K. Meyers, J. S., Vernick, J. S., & Webster, D. W. (2015). Effects of changes in permit-to-purchase handgun laws in Connecticut and Missouri on suicide rates. *Preventive Medicine*, 79, 43-49; Crifasi, C. K., Merrill-Francis, M., McCourt, A., Vernick, J. S., Wintemute, G. K., & Webster, D. W. (2018). Association between firearm laws and homicide in urban counties. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95, 383-390; Guis, M. (2017). Effects of permit-to-purchase laws on state-level firearm murder rates. *Atlantic Economic Journal*, 45, 73-80; Knopov, A., Siegel, M., Ziming, X., Rothman, E. F., Cronin, S. W., Hemenway, D. (2019). The impact of state firearm laws on homicide rates among Black and White populations in the United States, 1991-2016. *Health and Social Work*, 44(4), 232-240; Liu, Y., Siegel, M., & Sen, B. (2022). Association of state-level firearm-related deaths with firearm laws in neighboring states. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(11), e2240750; McCourt, A., Crifasi, C. K., Vernick, J. S., Kagawa, R., Wintemute, G., & Webster, D. W. (2020). Purchaser license, point-of-sale background check laws, and firearm homicide and suicide in 4 US states, 1985-2017. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110 (11), 1546-1552; RAND. (2024). *The effects of license and permitting requirements*.

<https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/license-to-own.html#summary-of-evidence-for-how-li->; Rudolph, K. E., Stuart, E. A., Vernick, J. S & Webster, D. W. (2015). Association between Connecticut’s permit-to-purchase handgun law and homicides. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(8), e49-e54; Webster, D., Crifasi, C. K., & Vernick, J. S. (2014). Effects of the repeal of Missouri’s handgun purchaser license laws on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 91(2), 293-302; Webster, D., Crifasi, C. K., & Vernick, J. S. (2014). Erratum to: Effects of the repeal of Missouri’s handgun purchaser license law on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health*, 91(3), 598-601; Webster, D. W., Vernick, J.S., Zeoli, A. M., & Manganello, J. A. (2004). Association between youth-focused firearm laws and youth suicides. *JAMA*, 292(5), 594-601.

Firearm-Related Homicide Rates

Research on the impact of firearm purchaser licenses on reducing firearm-related homicides is mixed.⁶⁹ For example, one study found an 11% reduction in firearm homicides in urban counties following the implementation of firearm purchaser license laws,⁷⁰ while another study reported that the 2007 repeal of Missouri's firearm purchaser license law was associated with a 25% increase in the state's annual homicide rate.⁷¹ However, not all findings support a significant effect. One study found that the implementation of firearm purchaser license laws had no statistically significant effect on state-level firearm homicide rates.⁷²

Generally, the number and rate of firearm-related homicides varied widely across states, including those that have implemented firearm purchaser license laws.⁷³ For example, as seen in Appendix C, both the number and rate of firearm-related homicides varied significantly between 2017 and 2023 across states with active firearm purchaser license programs. Notably, Virginia had lower firearm-related homicide rates compared to neighboring jurisdictions with firearm purchaser license laws, such as Maryland, North Carolina, and Washington, D.C.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Crifasi, C. K., Merrill-Francis, M., McCourt, A., Vernick, J. S., Wintemute, G. K., & Webster, D. W. (2018). Association between firearm laws and homicide in urban counties. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95, 383-390; Crifasi, C. K., Merrill-Francis, M., McCourt, A., Vernick, J. S., Wintemute, G. K., & Webster, D. W. (2018). Correction to: Association between firearm laws and homicide in urban counties. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95, 773-776; Guis, M. (2017). Effects of permit-to-purchase laws on state-level firearm murder rates. *Atlantic Economic Journal*, 45, 73-80; Hasegawa, R. B., Webster, D. W., & Small, D. S. (2019). Evaluating Missouri's handgun purchaser law: A bracketing method for addressing concerns about history interacting with group. *Epidemiology*, 30(3), 371-379; Knopov, A., Siegel, M., Ziming, X., Rothman, E. F., Cronin, S. W., Hemenway, D. (2019). The impact of state firearm laws on homicide rates among Black and White populations in the United States, 1991-2016. *Health and Social Work*, 44(4), 232-240; Liu, Y., Siegel, M., & Sen, B. (2022). Association of state-level firearm-related deaths with firearm laws in neighboring states. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(11), e2240750; Luca, M., Malhotra, D., & Poliquin, C. (2017). Handgun waiting periods reduce gun deaths. *PNAS*, 114(46), 12162-12165; McCourt, A., Crifasi, C. K., Vernick, J. S., Kagawa, R., Wintemute, G., & Webster, D. W. (2020). Purchaser licensing, point-of-sale background check laws, and firearm homicide and suicide in 4 US states, 1985-2017. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110 (11), 1546-1552; Rudolph, K. E., Stuart, E. A., Vernick, J. S. & Webster, D. W. (2015). Association between Connecticut's permit-to-purchase handgun law and homicides. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(8), e49-e54; Siegel, M. (2020). The impact of state-level firearms laws on homicide rates by race/ethnicity. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/254669.pdf>; Siegel, M., Solomon, B., Knopov, A., Rothman, E. F., Cronin, S. W., Xuan, Z., & Hemenway, D. (2020). The impact of state firearm laws on homicide rates in suburban and rural areas compared to large cities in the United States, 1991-2016. *Journal of Rural Health*, 36(2), 255-265; Webster, D., Crifasi, C. K., & Vernick, J. S. (2014). Effects of the repeal of Missouri's handgun purchaser license laws on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 91(2), 293-302; Webster, D., Crifasi, C. K., & Vernick, J. S. (2014). Erratum to: Effects of the repeal of Missouri's handgun purchaser license law on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health*, 91(3), 598-601.

⁷⁰ Crifasi, C. K., Merrill-Francis, M., McCourt, A., Vernick, J. S., Wintemute, G. K., & Webster, D. W. (2018). Association between firearm laws and homicide in urban counties. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95, 383-390, note at p. 389: "As with all observational studies, there is a risk of selection bias as states choose whether to pass a policy or not."; Crifasi, C. K., Merrill-Francis, M., McCourt, A., Vernick, J. S., Wintemute, G. K., & Webster, D. W. (2018). Correction to: Association between firearm laws and homicide in urban counties. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95, 773-776.

⁷¹ Webster, D., Crifasi, C. K., & Vernick, J. S. (2014). Effects of the repeal of Missouri's handgun purchaser license laws on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 91(2), 293-302, note at pp. 299-300: "Critics could question the use of a relatively short pre-repeal baseline period used for this study. Using more longitudinal observations can potentially produce more accurate forecasts of the counterfactual in interrupted time-series impact studies. The generalizability of our findings to other states with [permit-to-purchase] handgun laws is unknown."; Webster, D., Crifasi, C. K., & Vernick, J. S. (2014). Erratum to: Effects of the repeal of Missouri's handgun purchaser license law on homicides. *Journal of Urban Health*, 91(3), 598-601.

⁷² Guis, M. (2017). Effects of permit-to-purchase laws on state-level firearm murder rates. *Atlantic Economic Journal*, 45, 73-80, note at p. 79: "Unfortunately, very little research has been conducted on [permit-to-purchase (PTP)] laws. Future research should focus on the use of more recent data, an examination of some of the more recently enacted PTP laws, and the use of more sophisticated statistical models so that the true relationship between PTP laws and crime can be ascertained. In addition, future research should examine the relationship between PTP laws and all types of gun-related violent crimes."

⁷³ FBI, Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, 2017-2024; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), 2017-2023.

⁷⁴ North Carolina repealed its firearm purchaser license law in March 2023.

Firearm-Related Suicide Rates

Research on the effects of firearm purchaser licenses on suicide rates is also mixed.⁷⁵ For example, one study found that the 2007 repeal of Missouri's firearm purchaser license law was associated with a 22% increase in firearm suicide rates among young adults aged 19-24,⁷⁶ while another study found a 16% increase in the overall firearm suicide rate after the repeal.⁷⁷ However, another study found that the implementation of firearm purchaser license laws was associated with an approximate 18% increase in suicide rates among youth aged 18-20 in the three states examined.⁷⁸

Generally, the number and rate of firearm-related suicides varied widely across states, including those with active firearm purchaser license laws.⁷⁹ As shown in Appendix D, both the number and rate of firearm suicides varied significantly between 2017 and 2023 across states with active firearm purchaser license laws. When comparing neighboring states, Virginia consistently had higher firearm-related suicide rates than Maryland, but lower rates than North Carolina.⁸⁰

Firearm Trafficking

Research generally supports the role of firearm purchaser licenses in reducing firearm trafficking both within and across state lines.⁸¹ Specifically, research has found that a significant number of firearms

⁷⁵ See, e.g., Andrés, A. R., & Hempstead, K. (2011). Gun control and suicide: The impact of state firearm regulations in the United States, 1995–2004. *Health Policy*, 101(1), 95-103; Bhatt, A., Wang, X., Cheng, A., Morris, K., Beyer, L., Chestnut, A., Steigerwalt, K., & Metzner, J. (2020). Association of changes in Missouri firearm laws with adolescent and young adult suicides by firearms. *JAMA Network Open*, 3(11), e2024303; Crifasi, C.K. Meyers, J. S., Vernick, J. S., & Webster, D. W. (2015). Effects of changes in permit-to-purchase handgun laws in Connecticut and Missouri on suicide rates. *Preventive Medicine*, 79, 43-49; Depew, B., & Swensen, I. (2022). The effect of concealed-carry and handgun restrictions on gun-related deaths: Evidence from the Sullivan Act of 1911. *Economic Journal*, 132(646), 2118-2140; Fridel, E. E., Zimmerman, G. M., & Arrigo, S. R. (2024). Examining the impact of minimum handgun purchase age and background check legislation on young adult suicide in the United States, 1991-2020. *American Journal of Public Health*, 114(8), 805-813; Liu, Y., Siegel, M., & Sen, B. (2022). Association of state-level firearm-related deaths with firearm laws in neighboring states. *JAMA Network Open*, 5(11), e2240750; Luca, M., Malhotra, D., & Poliquin, C. (2017). Handgun waiting periods reduce gun deaths. *PNAS*, 114(46), 12162-12165; McCourt, A., Crifasi, C. K., Vernick, J. S., Kagawa, R., Wintemute, G., & Webster, D. W. (2020). Purchaser licensing, point-of-sale background check laws, and firearm homicide and suicide in 4 US states, 1985-2017. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110 (11), 1546-1552; Webster, D. W., Vernick, J.S., Zeoli, A. M., & Manganello, J. A. (2004). Association between youth-focused firearm laws and youth suicides. *JAMA*, 292(5), 594-601.

⁷⁶ Bhatt, A., Wang, X., Cheng, A., Morris, K., Beyer, L., Chestnut, A., Steigerwalt, K., & Metzner, J. (2020). Association of changes in Missouri firearm laws with adolescent and young adult suicides by firearms. *JAMA Network Open*, 3(11), e2024303, note at p. 9: "...We cannot be certain about other policies (related to firearms, public health, or mental health) that may have affected firearm suicides. We also did not include covariates in the young adult group related to depression or substance use, which may have affected suicide rates."

⁷⁷ Crifasi, C.K. Meyers, J. S., Vernick, J. S., & Webster, D. W. (2015). Effects of changes in permit-to-purchase handgun laws in Connecticut and Missouri on suicide rates. *Preventive Medicine*, 79, 43-49, note at p. 48: "As with most evaluations of public policy, we cannot rule out the possibility that our estimates of the associations between PTP laws and suicide rates are confounded by unmeasured determinants of suicide correlated with changes in the laws... These laws appear to be protective in ways that you might hypothesize based on what is known about the role of firearms and risk of suicide, but it is unclear exactly what magnitude effect on lives saved these laws have."

⁷⁸ Webster, D. W., Vernick, J.S., Zeoli, A. M., & Manganello, J. A. (2004). Association between youth-focused firearm laws and youth suicides. *JAMA*, 292(5), 594-601, note at p. 599: "Similarly, our findings for permit-to-purchase licensing laws should be regarded with skepticism since they are based on just 3 changes in state law occurring during the study period, none of which involved a very restrictive licensing scheme."

⁷⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), 2017-2023.

⁸⁰ North Carolina repealed its firearm purchaser license law in March 2023.

⁸¹ See, e.g., Crifasi, C. K., Buggs, S. A. L., Choksy, S., & Webster, D. W. (2017). The initial impact of Maryland's Safety Act of 2013 on the supply of crime handguns in Baltimore. *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 3(5), 128-140; Collins, T., Greenberg, R., Siegel, M., Xuan, Z., Rothman, E. F., Cronin, S. W., & Hemenway, D. (2018). State firearm laws and the interstate transfer of guns in the USA, 2006-2016. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95, 322-336; Kahane, L.H. (2020). State gun laws and the movement of crime guns between states. *International Review of Law and Economics*, 61, 105871; Li, M., Small, D., Ye, T., Lin, Y., & Webster, D. (2023). Examining a hypothesized causal chain for the effects of the 2007 repeal of the permit-to-purchase license law in Missouri: Homicide guns recovered in state and within a year of purchase. *Journal of Urban Health*, 100, 425-430; Webster, D. W., Vernick, J.S., & Hepburn, L. M. (2001). Relationship between license, registration, and other gun sales laws and the source state of crime guns. *Injury Prevention*, 7, 184-189; Webster, D. W., Vernick, J. S., McGinty, E. E., & Alcorn, T. (2013). Preventing the diversion

used in crimes originated in states with weaker firearm-related laws, including states without firearm purchaser licensing requirements, private sale regulations, lost or stolen firearm reporting requirements, or handgun registries.⁸² Further, states that have implemented firearm purchaser license laws, along with related requirements such as waiting periods and prohibitions for those individuals convicted of violent misdemeanors, appear to show reduced in-state access to firearms that could be used in crimes.⁸³ However, this body of research acknowledges that the specific impact of firearm purchaser license laws alone cannot be determined, as firearm trafficking can be influenced by a variety of other factors.⁸⁴

Caution in Comparison of State-Level Data

Meaningful comparisons across states are challenging due to substantial differences in demographic, socioeconomic, and legal frameworks. Criminal justice and public health data sources also strongly caution against ranking states, as factors such as population density, residential mobility, and economic factors can impact crime and mortality rates within jurisdictions.⁸⁵

Resources and Policy Considerations for Firearm Purchaser Licenses

What resources are needed for a firearm purchaser license program?

Implementing and administering a firearm purchaser license program requires significant resources. For example, Delaware implemented a law requiring a permit to purchase a handgun beginning in November 2025.⁸⁶ The fiscal note for the Delaware legislation that created this handgun permitting program estimated \$2.6 million in one-time program implementation costs, along with recurring operating costs of almost \$8 million in the first year and nearly \$9 million in both the second and third years.⁸⁷ Similarly, the state of Washington estimated that its firearm purchaser permit program, scheduled to take effect in May 2027, will require operating expenditures in the millions of dollars, with

of guns to criminals through effective firearm sales laws. In *Reducing gun violence in America* (Vol. 9781421411118, pp. 109-121). The Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁸² Webster, D. W., Vernick, J. S., McGinty, E. E., & Alcorn, T. (2013). Preventing the diversion of guns to criminals through effective firearm sales laws. In *Reducing gun violence in America* (Vol. 9781421411118, pp. 109-121). The Johns Hopkins University Press.

⁸³ Collins, T., Greenberg, R., Siegel, M., Xuan, Z., Rothman, E. F., Cronin, S. W., & Hemenway, D. (2018). State firearm laws and the interstate transfer of guns in the USA, 2006-2016. *Journal of Urban Health*, 95, 322-336.

⁸⁴ Andrade, E. G., Hoofnagle, M. H., Kaufman, E., Seamon, M. J., Pah, A. R., & Morrison, C. N. (2020). Firearm laws and illegal firearm flow between US states. *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, 88(6), 752-759; Kaufman E. J., Morrison, C. N., Branas, C. C., & Wiebe, D. J. (2018). State firearm laws and interstate firearm deaths from homicide and suicide in the United States: A cross-sectional analysis of data by county. *JAMA Internal Medicine*, 178(5), 692-700.

⁸⁵ See, e.g., FBI. (2012). Caution against ranking. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/cautionagainstranking.pdf>. For example, “rankings lead to simplistic and/or incomplete analyses that often create misleading perceptions adversely affecting cities and counties, along with their residents.”; CDC Wonder. (2025). Suicide rates by state. <https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/facts/rates-by-state.html#:~:text=Although%20adjusted%20for%20differences%20in%20age%2Ddistribution%20and,may%20be%20unreliable%20due%20to%20instability%20in>. For example, “...rankings by state do not take into account other state specific population characteristics that may affect the level of mortality.”

⁸⁶ DEL. CODE. ANN. tit. 11, § 1448D (2025). See Summers, M. WBOC. (2025, November 17). *Delaware’s permit to purchase handgun law takes effect; What to know and who has exemptions*. https://www.wboc.com/news/delawares-permit-to-purchase-handgun-law-takes-effect-what-to-know-and-who-has-exemptions/article_011b04be-7ee3-4cad-ae4b-57c44a6a13d6.html.

⁸⁷ See Delaware General Assembly. Senate Bill 2, 152nd General Assembly (2023-2024). *Fiscal note*. <https://legis.delaware.gov/BillDetail?LegislationId=130218>.

costs expected to be offset through permitting fees.⁸⁸ In addition, officials in Maryland and Massachusetts both indicated that administering their firearm purchaser license programs requires significant ongoing funding.⁸⁹

Implementing and administering a firearm purchaser license program in Virginia would require additional resources. Specific needs would depend on the final components of any legislation, but are likely include funding for increased staffing (including office space and equipment for new staff), technology system upgrades, development of license application and continuous monitoring processes, creation of and updates to a firearm safety training course curriculum, certification of firearm safety training course instructors, and litigation of license denials and revocations.

Could Virginia implement other measures in lieu of a firearm purchaser license?

Yes. If resource challenges or other logistical concerns exist, Virginia could enact certain components of a firearm purchaser license, such as:

- Requiring completion of a firearm safety course prior to a firearm purchase;
- Establishing a waiting period after the purchase or transfer of a firearm; or,
- Mandating fingerprinting as an additional component of the background check conducted by the Virginia State Police.

Firearm Safety Course Prior to a Firearm Purchase

Three states, including California,⁹⁰ Rhode Island,⁹¹ and Washington,⁹² require a person to complete a firearm safety course before purchasing a firearm, but do not require a firearm purchaser license as part of the transaction. Virginia does not require the completion of a firearm safety course prior to a firearm purchase.

Waiting Period After Purchase of a Firearm

Several states and Washington, D.C., require a person to wait a specified time period before taking possession of a firearm following a purchase or transfer, with waiting periods ranging from 3 to 10 days.⁹³ Some research indicates that such waiting periods may contribute to reductions in both

⁸⁸ See Washington State Legislature. House Bill 1163 (2025-26).

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary/?BillNumber=1163&Year=2025&Initiative=false>. See also Washington State Office of Financial Management. (2025, June 24). Fiscal note for HB1163. <https://fnspublic.ofm.wa.gov/FNSPublicSearch/Search/bill/1163/69>.

⁸⁹ Maryland Department of State Police, personal communication, October 21, 2025, and the Massachusetts Department of Criminal Justice Information Services, personal communication, October 22, 2025.

⁹⁰ CAL. PENAL CODE § 31610 et seq. (2025). The safety course is required for any firearm.

⁹¹ 11 R.I. GEN. LAWS §§ 11-47-35 and 11-47-35.1 (2025). The safety course is only required for pistols or revolvers.

⁹² WASH. REV. CODE § 9.41.1132 (2025). The safety course is required for any firearm. This is an independent requirement that will be in effect until May 1, 2027, when Washington's firearm purchaser license legislation takes effect. After May 1, 2027, the safety course will be part of the overall licensing requirements.

⁹³ See Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. *Gun sales: Waiting periods*. <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/gun-sales/waiting-periods/>. See also Everytown Research & Policy. *Which states require a waiting period before gun purchases?* <https://everytownresearch.org/rankings/law/waiting-periods/>.

homicides and suicides.⁹⁴ Virginia does not require such a waiting period after a firearm purchase or transfer.

Fingerprinting as Part of Background Check by Virginia State Police

When conducting a background check for a firearm sale or transfer, the Virginia State Police uses the Master Name Index, which utilizes a person's name, date of birth, sex, race, and Social Security number to identify any potential disqualifying factors across criminal records, mental health records, fugitive warrants, protective orders, and immigration databases, as well as through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System.⁹⁵ The Virginia State Police do not require fingerprints as part of this process; however, fingerprints could be useful in cases where a person has changed their name or is listed as an alias on a criminal record.⁹⁶

Several states require fingerprinting as part of the firearm purchaser license application process,⁹⁷ but staff did not identify any states requiring fingerprints as part of the background check at the point of a firearm sale or transfer. Virginia could consider incorporating fingerprinting as an additional component of its existing background check process. While a fingerprinting component could complement the existing background check process, it may present resource or other logistical challenges to the Virginia State Police, firearm retailers, and firearm purchasers.

CONCLUSION

A firearm purchaser license is a government-issued license that a person must obtain before lawfully purchasing or otherwise taking possession of a firearm. This license is intended to enhance the background check process; reduce firearm-related homicides, suicides, and injuries; limit firearm

⁹⁴ Anestis, M. D., & Anestis, J. C. (2015). Suicide rates and state laws regulating access and exposure to handguns. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(10), 2049-2058, note at p. 2057: "...Other variables that could potentially be relevant to suicide-related outcomes at statewide levels (e.g., religiosity, prevalence of specific mental illnesses) were not included because of the difficulty in quantifying such variables. . . It was also unclear to what extent having more than 1 of these laws or specific combinations of laws might have a more potent impact relative to having only 1 (or an alternative combination) in place."; Arnold, G. E., & Priestley, M. B. (2025). Do gun-purchase waiting periods save lives? *Health Economics*, 34, 1461-1473; Donohue, J. J., Cai, S. V., & Ravi, A. (2023). *Age and suicide impulsivity: Evidence from handgun purchase delay laws* (Working Paper No. 31917). National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w31917>; Dunton, Z. R., Kohlbeck, S.A., Lasarev, M. R., Vear, C.R., & Hargarten, S. W. (2022). The association between repealing the 48-hour mandatory waiting period on handgun purchases and suicide rates in Wisconsin. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 26(3), 1327-1335, note at p.1333: "While the conclusions of this study suggest a correlation between increased suicide rates among certain populations and a firearm policy change, there are multiple confounding factors, such as disparaging state or national events, which occurred within our study timeline that we did not account for."; Edwards, G., Nesson, E., Robinson, J. J., & Vars, F. (2018). Looking down the barrel of a loaded gun: The effect of mandatory handgun purchase delays on homicide and suicide. *Economic Journal*, 128(616), 3117-3140; Leung, C., Kaplan, M. S., & Xuan, Z. (2019). The association between firearm control policies and firearm suicide among men: A state-level age-stratified analysis. *Health & Social Work*, 44(4), 249-258, note at p. 255: "A fifth limitation is the inability to analyze certain confounding residuals such as other gun policies and unmeasured factors that could measure gun culture in each state."; Luca, M., Malhotra, D., & Poliquin, C. (2017). Handgun waiting periods reduce gun deaths. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(46), 12162-12165; Ludwig, J., & Cook, P. J. (2000). Homicide and suicide rates associated with implementation of the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act. *JAMA*, 284(5), 585-591; Oliphant, S. N. (2022). Effects of Wisconsin's handgun waiting period repeal on suicide rates. *Injury Prevention*, 28, 580-584, note at p. 584: "... as with any analysis, the omission of important covariate measures or confounders could also bias estimates."; Roberts, D. W. (2009). Intimate partner homicide: Relationships to alcohol and firearms. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 25(1), 67-88.

⁹⁵ Virginia State Police. (2025, November 19). *Firearms Transaction Center*. <https://vscc.virginia.gov/2025/Nov19VSCCMtg/Firearms%20Transaction%20Center%20-%20%20VSCC%20Mtg%2011-19-25.pdf>.

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ See Appendix B.

trafficking; and, promote firearm safety and training. However, concerns have been raised that such licenses infringe on the Second Amendment and lawful firearm purchasers.

Currently, 14 states and Washington, D.C., have firearm purchaser license laws, though the components of these licenses vary significantly across jurisdictions. In addition, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit recently upheld Maryland's firearm purchaser license law against a Second Amendment challenge.

Research on the effectiveness of firearm purchaser licenses on firearm-related violence is mixed. At the same time, implementing and administering such a license requires significant resources.

Ultimately, enacting a firearm purchaser license law is a policy decision. Virginia could enact a firearm purchaser license law or, if resource challenges or other logistical concerns exist, could instead implement more limited components of such a law.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Everytown for Gun Safety

Giffords

Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions

Maryland Department of State Police

Massachusetts Department of Criminal Justice Information Services

National Shooting Sports Foundation

Office of the Attorney General of Virginia

Virginia Center for Public Safety

Virginia Citizens Defense League

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Virginia Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission

Virginia Office of the Chief Medical Examiner

Virginia State Police

APPENDIX A: STATE FIREARM PURCHASER LICENSE LAWS (AS OF 11/2025)

States With Active Firearm Purchaser License Laws	
State	Statute(s)
Connecticut	CONN. GEN. STAT. § 29-36f <i>et seq.</i> CONN. GEN. STAT. § 29-37p <i>et seq.</i>
Delaware	DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 11, § 1448D
Hawaii	HAW. REV. STAT. § 134-2
Illinois	430 ILL. COMP. STAT. ANN. 65/2
Maryland	MD. CODE ANN., PUB. SAFETY § 5-117.1 <i>et seq.</i>
Massachusetts	MASS. ANN. LAWS ch. 140, § 129B MASS. ANN. LAWS ch. 140, § 131
Michigan	MICH. COMP. LAWS § 28.422 <i>et seq.</i>
Minnesota	MINN. STAT. § 624.7131
Nebraska	NEB. REV. STAT. ANN. § 69-2404 <i>et seq.</i>
New Jersey	N.J. REV. STAT. § 2C:58-3
New York	N.Y. PENAL LAW § 400.00 <i>et seq.</i>
Washington, D.C.	D.C. CODE ANN. § 7-2502.01 <i>et seq.</i>

States With Firearm Purchaser License Laws to Take Effect	
State	Statute(s) / Effective Date
Colorado	COLO. REV. STAT. §§ 18-12-116 and 33-9-115 See SB25-003 (2025 Regular Session) Effective August 2026
Oregon	OR. REV. STAT. § 166.500 <i>et seq.</i> Effective Date Unknown - Pending Litigation
Washington	WASH. REV. CODE ANN. § 9.41.090 <i>et seq.</i> See HB1163 (Ch. 370, 2025 Regular Session) Effective May 2027

States That Repealed Firearm Purchaser License Laws	
State	Year Enacted / Repealed
Missouri	Enacted 1927 / Repealed 2007
Iowa	Enacted 1979 / Repealed July 2021
North Carolina	Enacted 1919 / Repealed March 2023

APPENDIX B: STATE FIREARM PURCHASER LICENSE (FPL) COMPONENTS (AS OF 11/2025)

14 States and Washington, D.C., Have FPL Laws:

- States: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, and Washington
 - **Required to Purchase a Firearm:**
 - Currently Active
 - Connecticut (1995; new requirements effective April 1, 2014)
 - Delaware (2025)
 - Hawaii (1994; new requirements effective January 1, 2024)
 - Maryland (2013)
 - Michigan (effective 2024 for all firearms)
 - Nebraska (1989)
 - New Jersey (1926; new requirements effective 1966)
 - Enacted with a Delayed Effective Date
 - Colorado (enacted April 2025; effective August 2026)
 - Oregon (ballot initiative in 2022; not effective due to litigation)
 - Washington (enacted May 2025; effective May 1, 2027)
 - **Required to Own or Possess a Firearm (including purchase):**
 - Illinois (1968)
 - Massachusetts (1975; new requirements effective 1999)
 - New York (1911; new requirements 2013)
 - Washington, D.C. (1976; new requirements effective 2008)
 - **Required for Private Transfers only:** Minnesota

3 States Repealed Their FPL Law:

- Missouri (1927; repealed 2007)
- Iowa (1979; repealed July 2021)
- North Carolina (1919; repealed March 2023)

3 States Only Require a Firearm Safety Course to Purchase a Firearm:

- California (no FLP law)
- Rhode Island (no FPL law)
- Washington (effective until May 1, 2027, when its new FPL law takes effect)

FPL Components Vary by State

- **Type of Firearm:**
 - FPL required for all firearms: 8 States and Washington, D.C.
 - Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington, Washington, D.C.

- FPL required for handguns only: 3 States
 - Delaware, Maryland, Nebraska
- FPL required for handguns and semi-automatic rifles: 2 States
 - Minnesota (private sales only), New York
- FPL required for semi-automatic firearms only: 1 State (Colorado)
- **Issuing Agency:**
 - State: Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Washington
 - Local: Colorado, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, D.C.
- **Application Fees:**
 - No fee: Delaware, Michigan, Minnesota
 - Fee set by each locality: Colorado, New York (\$3 to \$10), Washington, D.C.
 - Reasonable fee for the background check: Hawaii
 - Variable fee to cover direct and indirect costs: Washington
 - Maximum of \$65: Oregon
 - \$5: Nebraska
 - \$10: Illinois (plus cost of the background check)
 - \$25: New Jersey (handgun)
 - \$35: Connecticut
 - \$50: Maryland (plus cost of background check), New Jersey (long gun)
 - \$100: Massachusetts (persons over age 70 are exempt)
- **Renewal of Permit Fee:**
 - 8 states specify a fee for FPL renewal in their FPL statutory scheme.
 - No Fee: Minnesota, New Jersey (no fee for good cause shown for an additional 90 days)
 - \$10: Illinois
 - \$20 Maryland
 - \$35: Connecticut
 - \$50: New Jersey (long gun), Oregon (maximum)
 - \$100: Massachusetts (persons over 70 are exempt from fee)
- **Fingerprinting:**
 - 9 states and Washington, D.C., require fingerprinting to obtain an FPL.
 - Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, Washington, D.C.
 - 5 states do not require fingerprinting to obtain an FPL.
 - Colorado, Illinois (optional), Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska
- **Photograph:**
 - 7 states and Washington, D.C., require a photograph to obtain an FPL.
 - Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts (Large Capacity and Semi-Automatic License to Carry), New York, Oregon, Washington, D.C.
 - 7 states do not require a photograph to obtain an FPL.
 - Delaware, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Washington

- **In-Person Component:**
 - 11 states and Washington, D.C., require an in-person application component.
 - Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, Washington, D.C.
 - 3 states do not require an in-person application component.
 - Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota
- **Firearm Safety Course (With or Without Live Fire):**
 - 6 states require a firearm safety course with live fire.
 - Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Oregon, Washington
 - 3 states and Washington, D.C., require a firearm safety course without live fire.
 - Colorado, Connecticut, New Jersey, Washington, D.C.
 - 5 states do not require a firearm safety course.
 - Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New York
 - Note: 2 states do not have an FPL but require safe handling training or live fire to purchase a firearm.
 - California, Rhode Island
- **Time Period to Apply for an FPL After Completion of Firearm Safety Course:**
 - 2 years: Connecticut
 - 3 years: Maryland
 - 4 years: Hawaii, New Jersey
 - 5 years: Colorado, Delaware, Washington
 - None: Massachusetts, Oregon, Washington, D.C.
- **Maximum Time to Make Issuance Decision on an FPL Once Application is Received:**
 - No Time Period: Colorado, Michigan (due speed and diligence)
 - 3 days: Nebraska
 - 30 Days: Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, Washington
 - 40 Days: Hawaii (no sooner than 14 days), Massachusetts
 - 60 Days: Washington, D.C.
 - 90 Days: Connecticut
 - 180 days: New York
- **Risk-Based Denial (subjective criteria):**
 - 10 states and Washington, D.C., use risk-based denial.
 - Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, D.C.
 - 4 states do not use risk-based denial.
 - Connecticut, Maryland, Nebraska, Washington
- **Contact Local Law Enforcement to Investigate:**
 - 3 states require contact with local law enforcement to screen an applicant.
 - Delaware, Massachusetts, New York

- 4 states and Washington, D.C., do not require contact with local law enforcement to screen an applicant.
 - Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Washington, Washington, D.C.
- 7 states require local law enforcement to approve or deny an application.
 - Colorado, Hawaii, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oregon
- **Duration of an FPL and Number of Firearms that Can Be Purchased with an FPL:**
 - 30 Days: Hawaii (handgun only- one handgun per permit), Michigan (no limit)
 - 90 Days: New Jersey (handgun only- one handgun per permit)
 - 1 Year: Hawaii (rifle or shotgun only- no limit), Minnesota (no limit)
 - 2 Years: Delaware (no limit)
 - 3 Years: Nebraska (no limit), Washington, D.C. (no limit)
 - 5 Years: Colorado (semi-automatic firearms- no limit), Connecticut (no limit), Oregon (no limit), Washington (no limit)
 - 6 Years: Massachusetts (no limit)
 - 10 Years: Illinois (no limit), Maryland (no limit), New Jersey (rifle or shotgun only- no limit)
 - Varies by Locality: New York
 - New York City (no limit): 3 Years
 - Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester (no limits): 5 Years
 - All other localities (no limit): Valid until revoked, however licensees are required to recertify every 5 years.
- **Denial of Permit Process:**
 - 13 states and Washington, D.C., require written notice of denial.
 - Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, Washington, D.C.
 - 1 state does not require written notice of denial.
 - Michigan
- **Appeal of Denial:**
 - 13 states and Washington, D.C., have an appeals process for a denied application.
 - Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, Washington, D.C.
 - 1 state does not have an appeals process for a denied application.
 - Michigan
- **Revocation of Permit Process:**
 - 11 states and Washington, D.C., require written notice of the revocation of an FPL after a disqualifying event.
 - Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, Washington, Washington, D.C.
 - 1 state revokes the FPL through a court proceeding.
 - New Jersey

- 1 state does not have a written notice of revocation requirement but does revoke the FPL following a disqualifying event.
 - New York
- 1 state does not have a revocation process.
 - Michigan
- **Criminal Penalty Upon Permit Revocation (not surrendering permit):**
 - 3 states have a criminal penalty for failing to surrender a permit.
 - Connecticut, Illinois, Minnesota
 - 11 states and Washington, D.C., do not have a criminal penalty for failing to surrender a permit.
 - Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Washington, Washington, D.C.
- **Removal of Firearms after Revocation:**
 - 5 states and Washington, D.C., require the removal of firearms upon revocation of an FPL.
 - Delaware (if probable cause exists that the individual purchased a handgun with the permit), Illinois, Massachusetts, New York, Washington (law enforcement may ensure the individual is not in illegal possession of firearms.), Washington, D.C.
 - 9 states do not require the removal of firearms upon revocation of an FPL.
 - Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Oregon

7 States Allow a Concealed Carry Permit or Other License for a Firearm Purchase

- 6 states with an FPL requirement accept a concealed carry permit in place of the license for purchasing a firearm.
 - Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska
- 1 state with an FPL requirement accepts an active concealed carry permit if the FPL is expired.
 - Illinois

6 States with an FPL and Washington, D.C., also Have a Waiting Period before Transfer:

- 3 days: Colorado, Illinois (72 hours)
- 7 days: Maryland, New Jersey (handguns only)
- 10 days: Washington, Washington, D.C.
- 14 days: Hawaii (permit to acquire a firearm may not be issued until 14 days after the permit application is submitted; new permit is required for each handgun purchase).

APPENDIX C: FIREARM HOMICIDE RATES IN STATES WITH ACTIVE FIREARM PURCHASER LICENSE LAWS (2017-2023)

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
United States	14,542	4.47	13,958	4.27	14,414	4.39	19,384	5.85	20,958	6.31	19,651	5.90	17,927	5.35
Virginia	345	4.07	334	3.92	342	4.00	440	5.09	505	5.83	556	6.41	475	5.45
Connecticut	73	2.04	54	1.51	65	1.82	101	2.82	116	3.22	114	3.16	104	2.88
Hawaii	--	--	20*	1.41*	14*	0.99*	16*	1.10*	23	1.59	18*	1.25*	20*	1.39*
Illinois	934	7.31	784	6.16	791	6.25	1,167	9.12	1,292	10.18	1,091	8.67	962	7.67
Iowa^t	64	2.04	37	1.18	49	1.55	83	2.60	64	2.00	65	2.03	73	2.28
Maryland	454	7.53	426	7.05	468	7.73	526	8.52	592	9.59	539	8.74	461	7.46
Massachusetts	103	1.50	104	1.51	95	1.38	130	1.86	99	1.42	106	1.52	121	1.73
Minnesota	78	1.40	66	1.18	102	1.81	138	2.42	164	2.87	143	2.50	128	2.23
Nebraska	29	1.51	25	1.30	40	2.07	49	2.50	46	2.34	48	2.44	34	1.72
New Jersey	261	2.94	218	2.45	193	2.17	253	2.73	276	2.98	235	2.54	203	2.19
New York	312	1.59	356	1.82	326	1.68	561	2.79	613	3.09	528	2.68	430	2.20
North Carolina^t	522	5.08	489	4.71	541	5.15	744	7.12	850	8.04	781	7.30	727	6.71
Washington, D.C.	90	12.91	116	16.47	128	18.07	157	23.40	169	25.26	141	21.02	211	31.08

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), 2017-2023. Rates per 100,000.

Note the exclusion of the following states: Missouri was excluded because its FPL law was repealed in 2007; Michigan was excluded because its FPL law became effective in 2024 for all firearms; Colorado, Delaware, Oregon, and Washington were excluded because their FPL laws had delayed effective dates.

* Indicates unstable value (≤ 20 deaths).

-- Indicates suppressed value (between one to nine deaths).

^tIowa repealed its FPL law in July 2021, and North Carolina repealed its FPL law in March 2023.

APPENDIX D: FIREARM SUICIDE RATES IN STATES WITH ACTIVE FIREARM PURCHASER LICENSE LAWS (2017-2023)

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
United States	23,854	7.34	24,432	7.48	23,941	7.29	24,292	7.33	26,328	7.93	27,032	8.11	27,300	8.15
Virginia	672	7.93	679	7.98	661	7.73	697	8.07	709	8.19	723	8.33	730	8.38
Connecticut	109	3.05	127	3.55	118	3.31	109	3.05	122	3.39	132	3.66	112	3.10
Hawaii	30	2.10	30	2.11	41	2.90	31	2.14	42	2.90	45	3.13	50	3.48
Illinois	577	4.52	573	4.50	540	4.26	543	4.25	656	5.17	676	5.37	688	5.48
Iowa^t	222	7.06	231	7.33	233	7.37	260	8.15	293	9.16	288	9.00	266	8.29
Maryland	271	4.50	266	4.40	268	4.43	267	4.33	310	5.02	269	4.36	267	4.32
Massachusetts	152	2.22	148	2.15	142	2.06	134	1.92	136	1.95	149	2.13	147	2.10
Minnesota	365	6.55	356	6.35	350	6.21	354	6.20	393	6.87	402	7.04	379	6.61
Nebraska	126	6.57	145	7.53	154	7.97	139	7.08	145	7.38	185	9.40	165	8.34
New Jersey	204	2.30	193	2.17	173	1.95	181	1.95	195	2.10	229	2.47	214	2.30
New York	433	2.21	445	2.28	455	2.34	462	2.30	439	2.21	492	2.50	491	2.51
North Carolina^t	840	8.18	873	8.40	781	7.44	879	8.41	916	8.67	992	9.28	1,000	9.23
Washington, D.C.	--	--	--	--	12*	1.69*	--	--	12*	1.79*	12*	1.79*	10*	1.47*

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS), 2017-2023. Rates per 100,000.

Note the exclusion of the following states: Missouri was excluded because its FPL law was repealed in 2007; Michigan was excluded because its FPL law became effective in 2024 for all firearms; Colorado, Delaware, Oregon, and Washington were excluded because their FPL laws had delayed effective dates.

* Indicates unstable value (≤ 20 deaths).

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^tIowa repealed its FPL law in July 2021, and North Carolina repealed its FPL law in March 2023.