

Governor Carney Signs House Bill 174, Strengthens Penalties on “Straw Purchases”

Senator McDowell, Rep. Mitchell legislation makes jail time more likely for purchasers of illegal guns

DOVER, Del. – Governor John Carney signed [legislation](#) on Wednesday alongside members of the General Assembly, law enforcement and gun safety advocates, that strengthens penalties for illegal purchases of firearms, deterring “straw purchases” by making jail time more likely for the offender.

In 2013, Delaware became the eighth state to require that gun owners report lost or stolen weapons to police. Today, Delaware has taken additional steps to confront illegal transfer of weapons. The legislation, sponsored by Senator Harris McDowell and Representative Larry Mitchell, raises the first offense of purchasing or obtaining a firearm for someone not legally qualified to own, possess or purchase one from a Class F to a Class E Felony.

“This legislation takes necessary steps to toughen the penalties for purchasing a gun illegally,” said **Governor Carney**. “This passed with support from both parties, emphasizing our state’s commitment to confronting the issue of gun violence. I look forward to continuing to work with the General Assembly on this issue to make communities across our state safer.”

“Straw purchasers are circumventing the laws that we have set

up to interdict illegal firearms,” said **Senator Harris McDowell**. “We have to stop them if we are going to keep our families, neighborhoods, and law enforcement officers safe. Anyone who would purposefully buy a firearm with the intent to put it in the hands of a dangerous criminal deserves to face charges that not only fit the crime, but also make clear that nobody is above the law. I think we have done that with this bill, and I am proud to have sponsored it.”

“Reducing gun violence throughout Delaware requires a multi-pronged approach. There is no single effort that will solve the problem, so we have to be open to several different efforts,” said **Representative Larry Mitchell**. “Studies into gun-trafficking cases have shown that straw purchases are a huge part of the problem – nearly half of gun-trafficking cases involved straw purchases. If people know that significant jail time is more likely, we can hopefully reduce these crimes before they occur.”

“Every step we take to prevent gun violence in Delaware is a step in the right direction. Every step is meaningful,” said **Dennis Greenhouse, Chair of the Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence**. “The Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence applauds this legislation and the bipartisan support it received in the General Assembly. Making our communities safer is a goal we can all unite behind.”

“The Delaware State Police stands with the Governor and members of the General Assembly in support of this legislation as it specifically focuses on increasing consequences for those that purchase and illegally supply guns to those that cannot and should not have them. In some cases these are the very guns that contribute to gun violence and significantly impact the safety of communities across the state,” said **Colonel Nathaniel McQueen Jr., Superintendent of the Delaware State Police**.

The bill signing can be viewed here:
livestream.com/StateofDelaware/hb174

Visit de.gov/gunsafety to learn more about Governor Carney's call for comprehensive gun safety reforms.

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