Permit-to-Purchase Facts

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What is it?

Permit-to-purchase laws require prospective firearm purchasers to obtain a permit to purchase a firearm.

Colorado has a similar law for certain semiautomatic firearms. This effort would expand permitting to all firearms purchases.

How does it work?

Permit-to-purchase laws typically require the applicant to apply for a permit through local or state law enforcement, undergo a thorough background check (often using fingerprints), and complete a firearm safety training course. Permits are generally valid for a period of time and can then be renewed.

How does this help?

The comprehensive background check can catch additional disqualifying records, including some that may not have been sent to the FBI.

The safety training ensures that prospective gun owners know how to responsibly handle, store, and use a firearm.

The in-person application step and approval period help deter straw purchasers and people at risk of harming themselves or others.

See page two for data showing the impact of these laws.

Public support?

Support for permit-to-purchase laws is widely popular and bipartisan.

A 2025 survey of 1,551 Coloradans shows that 79% supported permit-to-purchase, including 69% with firearms in the home. 85% supported requiring completion of a firearm safety course before purchasing a firearm, including 77% with firearms in the home.[1]

72% of Americans support permit-to-purchase requirements. That number includes 64% of gun owners and 61% of Republicans.[2]

Get Involved

Visit **COPermit2Purchase.org** to learn more, get involved, donate, schedule a free information session, or provide feedback.

[1] COFIPS. (2025). Colorado Firearm Injury Prevention Survey 2025. Available at www.cofips.org.
[2] Villarreal S, Barnhorst A, Bonnie R, Chavis K, Crifasi C, Frattaroli S, Roskam K, Swanson J, Washington S, Horwitz, J (2025). Firearm Purchaser Licensing: Research Evidence to Inform State Policy. https://publichealth.jhu.edu/FPL-Report

Effectiveness of Permit-to-Purchase Laws

Eleven other states and the District of Columbia currently have permit-to-purchase laws. The Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions has conducted a series of studies examining the effects of these laws. Here's what they found:

Significant reduction of gun deaths in Connecticut.
Connecticut's permit-to-purchase law was associated with significant reductions in rates of firearm homicide and firearm suicide. A 2020 study estimates that the law reduced the state's firearm homicide rate by 28% and firearm suicide rate by 33% from 1996-2017.[1]

Increased gun death rates in Missouri after its permit-to-purchase law was repealed. The repeal of Missouri's permit-to-purchase law in 2007 was associated with a 25% increase in the firearm homicide rate in the first three years[2] and a 16% higher firearm suicide rate in the five years after its repeal.[3]

Protection of and by law enforcement.
A recent study found that permit-to-purchase laws were associated with a 28% lower rate of shootings by police officers.[4] Another study found that Missouri's permit-to-purchase law was associated with a lower rate of shootings of police.[5]

Lower rates of mass shootings in states with strong licensing laws.
Permit-to-purchase laws that required fingerprinting and an in-person application step were associated with 56% fewer mass shooting incidents and 67% fewer mass shooting victims than states without such laws.[6]

Reduction in urban gun violence.
Permit-to-purchase laws were associated with an 11% reduction in firearm homicides in urban counties from 1984-2015.[7]

Reduction in gun diversion.
Permit-to-purchase laws also help reduce the flow of gun trafficking. These laws are associated with fewer crime guns being recovered by law enforcement both within the state,[8] and by law enforcement in other states.[9]

Citations

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4. Crifasi, CK, Ward, J, McCourt, AD, Webster, D, & Doucette, ML. (2023). The association between permit-to-purchase laws and shootings by police. Injury Epidemiology.
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7. Crifasi CK, Merrill-Francis M, McCourt A, Vernick JS, Wintemute GJ & Webster DW. (2018). Correction to: Association between firearm laws and homicide in urban counties. Journal of Urban Health.
8. Webster DW, Vernick JS, Hepburn LM. (2001) Relationship between licensing, registration, and other gun sales laws and the source state of crime guns. Injury Prevention; Crifasi C, Buggs SAL, Choksy S, Webster D. (2017) The Initial Impact of Maryland's Firearm Safety Act of 2013 on the Supply of Crime Handguns in Baltimore, Russell Safe Foundation Journal of Social Science.
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