

Gov Christie Takes Action to Make Gun Bills Stronger, Argues We Must Be The Grown-Ups In The Room

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Tags: [Bill Action](#)

"WE MUST BE THE GROWN-UPS IN THE ROOM": When it comes to the issue of guns and public safety, Governor Christie has said from the beginning **we must focus on what actually works to reduce violence and not just what's politically popular or sounds good in name only**. Gun control legislation should be grounded in common-sense, not based on emotion in the aftermath of a tragedy. As the Governor said in January when he announced the NJ Safe Task Force, this "is the time for an honest conversation on how we realistically deal with what is a very complex issue."

More from the Governor at that January press conference: "We cannot and we should not let emotion guide our actions. We cannot let empty rhetoric, fear, division, and politics, along with the twenty-four hour media cycle take hold of this conversation and the things we must do to fundamentally deal with the very real problems we're facing in our homes, in our schools, in our state, and in our country."

A REMINDER ON THE STATE OF PLAY: Along these lines, it's important to keep in mind the current state of affairs of guns in New Jersey:

Just last week, the Governor signed 10 common sense gun-related bills passed by the Democratic legislature into law, fulfilling his promise to work across the aisle to keep the state safer:

<http://nj.gov/governor/news/news/552013/approved/20130808b.html>

Governor Christie enforces the existing gun laws already on the books here in New Jersey, which according to the Brady Campaign To Prevent Gun Violence, already rank as the second-toughest in the country. These restrictions include an assault weapons ban, a seven-day waiting period and the third-strictest magazine capacities in the country. New Jersey's existing gun laws also already include tough, thorough background checks. When a person applies for a firearms purchaser ID card which is mandated for any long gun or a handgun purchase permit, an extensive and thorough background investigation is already required. At the time of the firearm purchase, an instant background check is also performed. In fact, New Jersey's current background checks are stronger than the hotly-contested Toomey-Manchin legislation that made headlines last spring.

In April, the Governor put forward his own plan to responsibly expand our tough gun laws in three key components: <http://nj.gov/governor/news/news/552013/approved/20130419a.html>

Taking a comprehensive approach that seeks to address the root causes of violence in our society and not merely focus on gun control.

Strengthening New Jersey's existing background check requirement in two ways: mandating that mental health records are included in the instant background check process at the time of a firearm purchase as part of the National Instant Background Check system AND by requiring a valid government issued photograph ID in addition to New Jersey's FID card.

Addressing the influence of violence in video games on today's youth by requiring parental consent.

GOVERNOR TAKES FURTHER ACTION ON GUNS; CRITICIZES POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, HAZARD

APPROACH: Governor Christie took additional action on the remaining gun bills and in doing so, criticized the legislature's haphazard and politically motivated approach on guns. In April, Governor Christie, utilizing some recommendations from a bipartisan Taskforce, unveiled a comprehensive and sensible plan aimed at violence control. Instead of embarking on this course, the legislature passed several ill-conceived bills in an attempt to drive an emotional, political agenda. Their proposals were singularly focused and ignored the root causes of violence.

The Governor's actions today make these bills stronger and more viable:

SIGNING LEGISLATION TO CREATE A BIPARTISAN SCHOOL TASK FORCE (A-3583): Governor Christie signed Assembly Bill 3583 establishing the School Security Task Force, a 15-member body made up of members from the educational, security and law enforcement community, as well as the general public.

CALLING FOR CODIFICATION OF EXISTING LAW FOR TRACKING SEIZED WEAPONS WHILE KEEPING INLINE WITH FEDERAL LAW (A-3797): The Governor reinforced his sensible approach to gun safety by calling for existing state guidelines for the reporting of firearms seized from criminals, recovered in criminal investigations or

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found abandoned or discarded, to be codified in state law. State directives on this reporting already matches federal reporting requirements and the state Attorney General already requires that this information is shared with database systems, including the National Crime Information Center's 2000 System; NJ Trace (a part of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosive's "e-Trace System"); and the National Integrated Ballistics Identification Network. The Governor's action on bill A-3797 would codify these regulations, while at the same time making a minor change to bring the bill in line with federal law. The current bill calls for public disclosure of federal ballistics data (information that is already provided due to state law) which would be a direct violation of federal law (the Tiahrt Amendments).

SUPPORTS SEVERAL COMMON-SENSE MEASURES BUT "SMARTCARD" NOT FEASIBLE: Governor Christie supports several sensible measures that create uniformity, toughen penalties and protect our children. The Governor called for the following:

Requiring a New Jersey Firearms Identification Card for the purchase of all ammunition and reasonably restricting shipments of ammunition to the address specified on that Identification Card;

Protecting our children by creating a new criminal offense for any gun owner allowing a minor access to a firearm which results in injury or death;

Strengthening New Jersey's mental health laws by requiring physicians and screeners overseeing involuntary commitments to inquire about gun ownership, and

Requiring all local law enforcement entities to distribute a pamphlet explaining the best practices for gun ownership, and a list of available courses for basic and advanced firearms training that should be distributed at the time a permit or identification card is issued.

Acknowledges Creative and Novel Proposal That Exists Without Necessary Technology or Funding to Make it Work: The idea at the centerpiece of this proposal – a one stop shop firearm ID "smartcard" would help integrate various information in one place and speed the process for legal gun owners and purchasers. But as the Attorney General, the Superintendent of the State Police, and the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles have all stated, the "smartcard" cannot be implemented now, or any time in the foreseeable future. In this way, it is similar to the 2002 "Personalized Handgun" law that requires New Jersey to adopt guns equipped with technology ensuring that that weapon can only be fired by a recognized user. The technology didn't exist then, and it doesn't now 11 years later. The law has never been used in its existence. Similarly, while the smartcard may be a well-intentioned idea, it is unworkable and impractical.

Focusing on Common-Sense Solutions to Violence, Not In Name Only Proposals (A-3659): The bill passed by the legislature seeks to ban a firearm that has reportedly never been used in a crime in New Jersey. It imposes criminal liabilities on all current owners of these firearms, including those who believed that they had properly registered their guns with law enforcement. This bill purports to curb gun violence, when in reality the overly broad classification of firearms it calls for banning are lawfully used by competitive marksmen for long-range precision shooting and are not used by criminal interests because of their size and cost, which averages over \$10,000 per firearm. The Governor, the former chief federal prosecutor in New Jersey, favors proposals designed to provide real solutions to violence, so he is calling on the legislature to act on the dozens of proposals he put forward aimed at truly deterring criminals.

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