

Press Releases

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Bill would take guns away from domestic violence convicts, those with restraining orders

STATE HOUSE – Hoping to provide greater protection to victims of domestic violence as well as those potentially in danger, Sen. Cynthia A. Coyne (D-Dist. 32, Barrington, Bristol, East Providence) and Rep. Teresa A. Tanzi (D-Dist. 34, Narragansett, South Kingstown) have introduced legislation that would take firearms out of the hands of perpetrators of domestic violence.



It would also mandate that persons with a restraining order due to a domestic abuse case would be compelled to surrender their firearms.

The bill, which has been introduced in both the House and Senate, amends an existing law by compelling courts to order the surrender of firearms. It also adds language that would prevent a restrained person from purchasing, receiving, or attempting to purchase or receive a firearm while the restraining order is in effect.

“When it comes to domestic violence, firearms can truly serve to turn an already dangerous situation into a deadly one,” said Senator Coyne. “States that already restrict access to firearms by those under domestic violence restraining orders have seen a 25 percent reduction in domestic violence gun deaths.”

In addition to the firearm prohibition in restraining orders, the court would have the authority to prohibit domestic abusers from having guns. The bill also tightens up the language of the law, requiring specifically that guns be surrendered to the Rhode Island State Police, local police departments or a licensed gun dealer.

“This law would help law enforcement officials to protect women and children by keeping guns out of the hands of their abusers,” said Representative Tanzi. “While domestic abusers can’t pass a background check to buy new guns, we have to ensure that those who are found by courts to pose a threat are required to turn in guns they already own.”

Rhode Island is the latest state to take up this measure. Last year, both Colorado and Louisiana enacted legislation prohibiting people convicted of domestic violence or who are currently the subject of protective orders from possessing or purchasing a firearm.

Currently, 20 states prohibit people convicted of domestic violence misdemeanors from having guns, while 23 states prohibit people subject to domestic violence restraining orders from having guns.

The House bill ([2015-H 5655](#)) is co-sponsored by Representatives Marvin L. Abney (D-Dist. 73, Newport, Middletown), David A. Bennett (D-Dist. 20, Warwick), Kathleen A. Fogarty (D-Dist. 35, South Kingstown) and Edith H. Ajello (D-Dist. 1, Providence). It has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

The Senate bill is co-sponsored by Sen. Maryellen Goodwin (D-Dist. 1, Providence), President of the Senate M. Teresa Paiva Weed (D-Dist. 13, Newport, Jamestown), Sen. William J. Conley Jr. (D-Dist. 18, East Providence, Pawtucket) and Sen. Erin P. Lynch (D-Dist. 31, Warwick, Cranston). It has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

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