

All about Universal Background Checks

Ensuring Those Who Don't Qualify to Purchase Guns, Are Not Able To

What is a background check?

A background check is a process by which a person who is buying a gun must get approval. The buyer completes a [background check form](#). The form is reviewed by a government agency (Federal or state government). The purchase is then approved or denied.

The federal background check system applies to *handgun* sales and took effect in 1994. It was created through passage of The Brady Bill. The bill was named for former White House Press Secretary James Brady, who was paralyzed from a shooting directed at President Ronald Reagan.

What does a background check do?

The bill listed nine types of "prohibited purchasers." These are people who are not allowed to own guns. The background check reviews the data about people trying to buy guns to check if they are prohibited from buying a gun.

The gun buyer completes ATF Form 4473 (ATF is the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms). The buyer then pays a fee to a Federal Firearms Licensee (FFL or gun shop) to submit the background check.

The data is run through the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). This database is operated by the federal government using its data and data from the states.

In Pennsylvania, the State Police conduct the background check. They use the PA Instant Check System (PICS). This system uses state data and information in NICS.

Most background checks are completed within a few minutes of being submitted.

The PICS process has blocked about *140,000* gun sales to prohibited purchasers since 1998. NICS has blocked *over 3 million sales* since 1994.

What does "universal background check" mean?

The term "universal" refers to requiring a background check for *every gun sold**.

Currently, in Pennsylvania, private gun sellers, including high volume private sellers, can sell *long guns* (shot guns or rifles) to another person with no background check required.

Long guns include semi-automatic rifles such as an AR-15. Semi-automatic rifles have been used to commit several mass shootings.

**Under most proposed background check legislation, family members may transfer arms without a background check.*

Who are prohibited purchasers?

A prohibited purchaser is anyone who:

1. Has been convicted in any court of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year;
2. Is a fugitive from justice;
3. Is an unlawful user of or addicted to any controlled substance;
4. Has been adjudicated as a mental defective or committed to a mental institution;
5. Is an alien illegally or unlawfully in the United States;
6. Has been discharged from the Armed Forces under dishonorable conditions;
7. Having been a citizen of the United States, has renounced U.S. citizenship;
8. Is subject to a court order that restrains the person from harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner or child of such intimate partner, or;
9. Has been convicted in any court of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.

Why are background checks important?

ALL guns may kill or injure. Therefore, it's important that people who aren't allowed to own guns are not able to buy them.

No background check means no opportunity to stop a purchase by someone who isn't allowed.

These statistics show why including long guns in background checks can save lives:

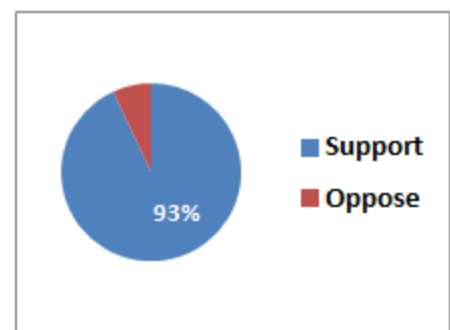
- Long guns are used in 10% of gun murders
- Long guns are used disproportionately by domestic abusers to kill women
- Long guns are frequently used by criminals against law enforcement
 - Since 2008, at least half of PA law enforcement officers killed by guns were killed by long guns

Why don't we have universal background checks?

Good question. Non-partisan polls show high levels of support for universal background checks.

A 2019 Quinnipiac University poll (8/2019) showed...

- 93% of all voters
- *Including 93% of gun owning voters*
--- supported a background check for every gun purchase.



Some people feel background checks violate their Second Amendment Rights. Others see them as an unreasonable burden due to the fee (set by the dealer, usually \$40 - \$60) or need to go to a dealer to get a background check. Studies show 99.9% of all Pennsylvanians live within 10 miles of a licensed dealer.

Visit www.gunsenseus.org for more information

PA Government

The Pennsylvania 2019 Universal Background Check Bills would change current law to include long guns in background check requirements (Title 18, section f. 2)

This would ensure a background check is performed before the purchase of both handguns and long guns (except for transfer among close family members.)

- **Senate Bill 88.** Sponsored by Senator Vincent Hughes. **Cosponsored by all Chester County Senators.** *(Co-sponsors almost always vote to support a bill.)*
- **House Bill 673.** Sponsored by Rep. Perry Warren. Cosponsored by Chester County Representatives Comitta, Friel-Otten, Sappey, Shusterman, Williams. (As of 5/5/19.)

Would you like your elected official to support Universal Background Checks? If they have not signed on already, here is a suggested message:

Dear NAME:

I believe all residents deserve to be safe. This means we should be sure that anyone who is buying a gun is not prohibited from doing so. Please support PA House Bill 673, and PA Senate Bill 88, legislation to enact a background check for every gun purchase

House Bill 673 for PA State Representatives | Senate Bill 88 for PA State Senators

US Government

Chester County Congresswoman Chrissy Houlahan has already voted to support universal background checks on legislation from the US House of Representatives.

Senator Bob Casey supports universal background checks.

Senator Patrick Toomey has supported some expansion of background checks in the past, but is not currently supporting the legislation passed by the US House.