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 Delaware Governor John Carney

**Governor Carney, Members of the General Assembly Announce Gun Safety Package**

*Joint Senate-House agreement ensures swift passage of critical gun safety measures*

**WILMINGTON, Del**. – Governor John Carney, along with Senate and House Democratic Leadership, on Thursday announced a commitment to advance multiple gun safety bills before the General Assembly adjourns on June 30.

The package of gun safety legislation includes:

* Banning the sale of assault weapons (HB 450)
* Limiting high-capacity magazines (SB 6)
* Raising the age from 18 to 21 to purchase most firearms (HB 451)
* Strengthening background checks by reinstituting the Firearm Transaction Approval Program (FTAP) (HB 423)
* Holding gun manufacturers and dealers liable for reckless or negligent actions that lead to gun violence (not yet introduced)
* Banning the use of devices that convert handguns into fully automatic weapons (not yet introduced)

“We have an obligation to do everything we can to prevent tragedies like we’ve seen across the country from happening here in Delaware,” said **Governor Carney**. “This is a historic, meaningful package of legislation and I look forward to seeing these bills on my desk this session.”

“From news cycle to news cycle and elections cycle to election cycle, Delawareans have been steadfast in their desire to see us take action that will reduce the gun violence plaguing our communities and address the wave of mass shootings gripping our nation,” said **Senate President Pro Tempore Dave Sokola, Senate Majority Leader Bryan Townsend and Senate Majority Whip Elizabeth “Tizzy” Lockman.**

“Governor Carney and the advocates who built consensus around this package of strong, public safety bills deserve a tremendous amount of credit for demanding action after the latest round of horrific mass shootings,” they said. “The safety of our children and our communities simply cannot wait for endless debate and fence sitting. After working for years to raise the level of responsible gun ownership in our state, we and our colleagues in the Senate Majority Caucus stand ready to pass these critical, lifesaving measures this year. If we are not doing everything we possibly can to end gun violence, we are not doing enough.”

“Last week, an 18-year-old legally purchased a military-style semi-automatic rifle and used it days later to murder 19 elementary school students and two teachers in Uvalde, Texas. Ten days earlier, an 18-year-old used a legally purchased semi-automatic rifle to kill 10 people at a supermarket in Buffalo, N.Y. The incidents have reignited discussions across the nation about gun safety and calls for legislative action to prevent future tragedies, and we are answering that call,” **said House Speaker Pete Schwartzkopf, Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst and Majority Whip Larry Mitchell.** “Taken together, these bills will have a significant and meaningful impact in combating gun violence and preventing future tragedies from happening in Delaware. While we can’t change the past, we can learn from it and try to prevent it from happening here. We are committed to passing strong firearm legislation that will make our communities safer.”

HB 450 and 451 will be heard in the House Administration Committee on Wednesday, June 8. If HB 450 is released from committee, it will be heard on the House floor on Thursday, June 9. The Senate will consider HB 450 and 451 promptly following House passage. The remainder of the package will be considered by both chambers before the end of June.

“Delaware must question what kinds of deadly weapons we allow to be sold, and to whom, in our state. To that end, we applaud the General Assembly for filing both a ban on the sale of assault-style weapons and a bill raising the minimum age for purchase,” said **Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence Executive Director Traci Murphy.** “It is a tragic fact that perpetrators of school shootings tend to be young, current or former students, and according to the [Giffords Law Center](https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fgiffords.org%2Flawcenter%2Fgun-laws%2Fpolicy-areas%2Fwho-can-have-a-gun%2Fminimum-age%2F%23footnote_152_5627&data=05%7C01%7CDrew.Volturo%40delaware.gov%7C8879b3e031834da7a8a708da44d951d1%7C8c09e56951c54deeabb28b99c32a4396%7C0%7C0%7C637897997410550583%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=hrExXdQEeGvu7kNs4osFRVjmT5WDsucfjN6IHLTd2BU%3D&reserved=0), 18-to-20-year-olds account for 4% of the U.S. population but 17% of known homicide offenders. Advocates for gun violence prevention have done critical work in recent years, and this is exactly what we had in mind – two chambers coming together to pass strong, meaningful policies that will save lives in Delaware, and protect our children and communities from the trauma of gun violence.”

“Guns are getting into the hands of people who choose to walk into schools and kill multiple children and educators. The latest tragedy, at Robb Elementary, yet again underscores the need for evidence based, commonsense gun safety laws that keep deadly weapons out of the hands of those too immature to purchase and use them responsibly” said **Delaware State Education Association President Stephanie Ingram**. “We owe it to our students and educators to focus on legislation that will help keep our schools and communities safe and welcoming places.”

Federal law requires a buyer to be at least 21 years old for all handgun purchases, but only 18 years old for long guns (including rifles and shotguns). State law mirrors those federal requirements. House Bill 451, sponsored by **House Speaker Pete Schwartzkopf** and **Senate President Pro Tempore David Sokola**, would increase to 21 the age of a person to whom another person can sell or transfer a semi-automatic firearm or ammunition for a firearm.

According to the Giffords Law Center, six other states require a person to be 21 to purchase a long gun. The others, including Delaware, follow the federal requirement of 18 years of age.

HB 451 would allow limited exceptions for shotguns and muzzle-loading rifles and related ammunition. Active military members, law enforcement officers, and those who have a concealed-carry license who are 18 years or older also would be exempted.

In the wake of the 2018 Parkland shooting, national chains Walmart and Dick’s Sporting Goods raised the minimum age to purchase a firearm in their stores to 21 years old.

Sponsored by **House Majority Leader Valerie Longhurst** and **Sen. Nicole Poore**, House Bill 450 would prohibit the manufacture, sale, offer to sell, transfer, purchase, receipt, possession, or transport of assault-style weapons in Delaware, according to a legal definition. The prohibition would include popular firearms such as AK-47s, AR-15s, UZIs and similar weapons.

The legislation would grandfather existing weapons and protect their owners from being misidentified as lawbreakers while placing restrictions on the transportation and use of those weapons.

Under the Delaware Lethal Firearms Safety Act of 2022, prohibited weapons would include specific assault long guns and pistols as spelled out in the bill, as well as “copycat” firearms. Copycats include a semi-automatic centerfire rifle, a semi-automatic shotgun that has a folding stock, or a shotgun with a revolving cylinder.

HB 450 would not prohibit the possession and transport of firearms that were lawfully possessed or fully applied for before the bill becomes law, with certain restrictions. There would be exceptions for law-enforcement and military personnel in the course of their official duties, and a limited exception for retired law-enforcement personnel. A person lawfully in possession of an assault weapon prior to the passage of HB 450 could lawfully transfer the weapon to their immediate family member, through inheritance or otherwise.

Additionally, the Department of Safety and Homeland Security would be required to develop a procedure for issuance of a voluntary certificate of possession to show lawful possession of an assault weapon prior to the bill becoming law. A gun owner would not be required to apply for the certificate. The department would not be permitted to retain copies of issued certificates or identifying information of any applicant.

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