

sidered to be hindering the effective control of guns and at the same time tighten other features of the law relating to the control of dangerous weapons generally.

Weaknesses contained in present law allow persons to come into possession of handguns without an adequate investigation of whether they should have such weapons from the standpoint of their stability and lawful intentions. For example, anyone in the District may keep a gun in his home, place of business or on any other land he may possess without any requirement of any type of license whatsoever. A license is required at present only when a pistol is carried on one's person outside of his property (sec. 22-3204, District of Columbia Code, 1961 edition).

Another inadequacy in existing law concerns the provisions requiring a waiting period before a seller may deliver a handgun to a purchaser (sec. 22-3208, District of Columbia Code, 1961 edition). The purpose of the waiting period is to give the police an opportunity to investigate the potential purchaser to determine if any reason exists why he should not have the weapon. The required waiting period may be as brief as 42 hours. This, police officials have indicated, is far too short a period in most instances for a thorough check to be made. Further, the statute does not provide specific authority for the police to actually forbid the delivery of the weapon in cases when the potential purchaser is determined not to be qualified to possess one. In addition, existing law, as it relates to possession of handguns by minors, implies that any person under the age of 21 years is free to have such weapons except as restricted by general provisions contained in the statute. Although the law appears to allow such possession, it specifically forbids the sale or transfer of any handguns to minors except by parents or guardians (sec. 22-3207, District of Columbia Code, 1961 edition). This means that a minor may bring into the District and have in his possession a handgun purchased elsewhere but it not permitted to purchase a handgun in the District. The rationale of the prohibition against any such purchase in the District appears to be that possession of a handgun by a minor is considered undesirable. The Commissioners believe the law should clearly prohibit possession of handguns by persons under the age of 18 years, except to permit certain activities under proper regulations, as for example, the participation in target shooting at authorized locations.

These inadequacies are in large part overcome by the proposed amendments contained in the draft bill. Other features of existing law are also substantially strengthened. Briefly, the major areas of change proposed by the amendments would provide the following:

1. Require every person in the District (with exception of police, military personnel, and certain other groups that are specifically exempted or may be exempted under regulatory authority granted the Commissioners) to obtain a permit from the Commissioners or their designated agent in order to legally possess a handgun. When an applicant demonstrates that he is a person of good moral character and responsibility, the Commissioners or their designated agent are required to issue a permit for possession of a handgun to be kept in his home or place of business or on other land he owns or possesses. When an applicant meets similar standards, in addition to demonstrating a need for a weapon to protect his person or property, the Commissioners or their designated agent may in their discretion issue a permit to carry a handgun on his person.

2. Prohibit possession of handguns in the District by person under 18 years of age, but allowing the Commissioners regulatory authority to permit such person to engage in such activities as target shooting and competitive shooting matches under restrictions that they may impose.

3. Prohibit the carrying about of any rifle or shotgun anywhere in the District unless such weapon is unloaded, except that the possession of a loaded rifle or shotgun kept in one's home, place of business or on other land owned or leased by such person, is permitted.

4. Require closer surveillance by law-enforcement authorities over the importation and delivery of handguns into the District to insure that these weapons not get into the hands of unqualified recipients. The Commissioners or their designated agent are given clear authority to order that no delivery be made to such person. No delivery or transfer of any handgun would be permitted by any person unless he first obtains written permission to do so.

5. Require stricter licensing of manufacturers and dealers in weapons in the District, including those selling weapons at retail and wholesale and those in the business of repairing firearms, and require records to be kept and reports to be made to the Chief of Police concerning weapons sold and repaired and to whom sold and delivered.