



## RHODE ISLAND POLICE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT  
Chief Brian Sullivan  
Lincoln Police Dept.

VICE PRESIDENT  
Chief Richard Ramsay  
West Greenwich Police Dept.

SERGEANT AT ARMS  
Colonel Mark Knott  
West Warwick Police Dept.

SECRETARY  
Colonel Michael Winquist  
Cranston Police Dept.

TREASURER  
Chief Edward Mello  
Jamestown Police Dept.

IMMEDIATE PAST  
PRESIDENT  
Colonel James Mendonca  
Rhode Island College  
Campus Police Dept.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Chief Sidney Wordell, Ret.

March 20, 2020

The Hon. Governor Gina Raimondo  
State House  
Providence, RI

Dear Governor Raimondo;

I am writing on behalf of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association (RIPCA) regarding the current state of affairs, where recent events have triggered a run by individuals purchasing firearms from local gun dealers. These gun dealers themselves have indicated that they have been flooded with gun purchases over the past week like they have never seen before, commenting that they struggle to keep up with the demand. Many say they have had trouble completing the required National Instant Criminal Background Checks through (NICS) due to busy signals while trying to phone in the checks, which we have learned is due to the massive increase of gun purchases nationally.

Two police departments, Warwick and Richmond handle a significant amount of the gun applications in the state and both have stated that they are overrun with applications. Colonel Rathbun of Warwick Pd advised that his department generally averages approximately 28 applications per day up until March 15<sup>th</sup>. Since then he has received 404 covering 3 days of sales, or approximately 135 per day. Chief Johnson of Richmond Pd indicated he was averaging about 5 permits per day prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> but increased to approximately 20 per day since that time. A survey of other departments advise of similar increases.

The issue law enforcement is having is the requirement under R.I.G.L. 11-47-35 and 11-47-35.2 which requires law enforcement to conduct background check of each applicant within 7 days to determine if there is any disqualifying information on the purchaser. Both statutes further state that if the law enforcement agency conducting the background check fails to complete or respond within those 7 days the transfer is allowed to proceed.

Many law enforcement agencies have reduced non-essential staff from their daily work force in compliance with The Center for Disease Control as well as your very own recommendations in an attempt to lessen the possibility of infection and spread of the COVID-19 virus. Coupled with the extraordinary increase in gun applications, Chiefs are struggling and in fact predicting they will be unable to process all of the applications within the 7 day period which will result in the transfer of guns to individuals which **have not** been thoroughly vetted as required.

[Type here]

Continued: Gun applications

With the uncertainty of what each day moving forward has in store for RI Law Enforcement and the possibility of staffing being further influenced by contact with individuals with suspected COVID-19 virus, causing personnel to be quarantined will only cause further delays in handling the gun applications.

The Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association is respectfully requesting you consider using your executive authority to suspend the 7 day background processing requirement and consider extending that deadline to 30 days from the date of the application under both R.I.G.L. 11-47-35 and 11-47-35.2. The RIPCA respects the requirements under the law and the right to purchase firearms, but due to circumstances beyond their control feel the above request is not only reasonable but prudent and has the full support of the Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Wordell", written in a cursive style.

Sidney Wordell  
Executive Director  
RI Police Chiefs' Assoc.