



Regulating Assault Weapons

Assault weapons are built for one purpose: To kill as many people as possible in as short a period of time as possible. These weapons of war have no place in the hands of Rhode Island civilians.

HB7217 – Sponsored by Representatives Knight, Caldwell, Boylan, Dawson, Speakman, Craven, Batista, Felix, McEntee, Ajello, **38 total sponsors**

SB2653 – Sponsored by Senators DiPalma, Miller, Euer, Pearson, Gallo, Bissaillon, Lauria, Lawson, Felag, Valverde, **25 total sponsors**

What would these bills do?

- Ban the possession, sale, and transfer of assault weapons.
- Possession of assault weapons owned on the effective date of the act would be “grandfathered,” but their use would be limited to certain specified areas.

What is an assault weapon?

Assault weapons are defined in the bills as any semi-automatic rifle equipped with a fixed, high-capacity magazine or that is capable of accepting a detachable magazine and also has one of a number of specified features that are commonly found on these high-powered firearms.

Strong public support

70.5%
of Rhode Islanders support regulating assault weapons

Source: 2020 poll conducted by Center for Research & Public Policy for RICAGV

A report from Uvalde, TX, indicates that officers delayed their response to the school shooting in part because they were afraid of the gunman’s rifle.

“You knew it was definitely an AR. There was no way of going in.”

- Uvalde Police Department Sgt. Donald Page

Assault weapons inflict battlefield injuries

The AR-15 was **developed for the military and was field tested in Vietnam in 1962.** Reports indicated that “the very high-velocity AR-15 projectiles” had caused:

- **Amputation of limbs**
- **Massive body wounds**
- **Decapitations**

Today’s AR-15 and similar military-style rifles retain the same features and capabilities, **except that they do not have fully automatic firing.**

Source: Kolbe v. Hogan, United States Court of Appeals, Fourth Circuit decision

“It’s something you never want to see and it’s something you don’t, you cannot, prepare for. It’s a picture that’s going to stay in my head forever, and that’s where I’d like for it to stay.”

- Uvalde Texas Coroner, Eulalio “Lalo” Diaz, Jr, on what he saw at Robb Elementary.



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2024

Regulating assault weapons prevents deaths from mass shootings

- A 2019 study found that mass shooting fatalities were **70% less likely** to occur from 1994 to 2004, when there was federal prohibition on assault weapons.
- Between 2009 and 2020, when assault weapons were used in a mass shooting, **six times as many people were shot, twice as many people were killed and 22 times as many people were wounded per incident on average**, compared to mass shootings where assault weapons were not used.

Source: Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund, "Twelve Years of Mass Shootings in the United States," June 4, 2021

The mass shooter's weapon of choice

Assault weapons have been used in the seven deadliest mass shooting in the last decade.

Source: Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence

AR-15 vs. 9mm handgun

"One looks like a grenade went off in there, the other looks like a bad knife cut."

Source: Dr. Peter Rhee, Section Chief, Trauma and Critical Care, Westchester Medical Center

Regulating assault weapons is constitutional

- Courts across the country have reaffirmed that **gun safety laws are constitutional** and not in conflict with Second Amendment rights.
- Ten states plus DC currently have some form of assault weapons prohibition in place, **including CT, MA, NY, NJ, DE, MD, CA, HI, IL and WA.**
- Lower courts have **repeatedly upheld these laws as constitutional.**

Assault weapons are a hazard in Rhode Island and pose a serious risk to law enforcement

- On February 10, 2022, **a gunman fired hundreds of rounds of ammunition at Providence police officers** using a cache of 15 weapons, including high-powered assault weapons, leading to a half-hour shoot out.
- On August 11, 2021, **a gunman used an AR-15 to fire upon a Providence police officer** responding to a domestic violence call at his residence.

"Once they [bullets from an assault weapon] enter the body, they fragment and explode, pulverizing bones, tearing blood vessels, and liquefying organs."

- Dr. Leana S. Wen, Emergency Physician and Visiting Professor at George Washington University School of Public Health

What about home protection?

In upholding the MA assault weapons ban in 2019, the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals said there was **no evidence an assault weapon has ever been used for home defense.**

"Not one of the plaintiffs or their six experts could identify even a single example of the use of an assault weapon for home self-defense."

- Worman v. Healey, 922 F.3d 26 (1st Cir. 2019)

"The AR-15 allows shooting on target literally as rapidly as the trigger can be pulled, while providing ample bullet speed to inflict lethal wounds."

- Dr. Ernest E. Moore, Journal of Trauma, in reference to the Parkland, FL school shooting