

**CALIFORNIA
FEDERATION TO
STOP
GUN
VIOLENCE**

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**CA CHAPTERS OF THE
BRADY CAMPAIGN TO
PREVENT GUN
VIOLENCE**



**COALITION AGAINST
GUN VIOLENCE, SANTA
BARBARA COUNTY**



**LEGAL COMMUNITY
AGAINST VIOLENCE**



**ORANGE CTY. CITIZENS
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF GUN VIOLENCE**



**VIOLENCE PREVENTION
COALITION OF
ORANGE COUNTY**



**VIOLENCE PREVENTION
COALITION OF
GREATER LOS
ANGELES**



**WOMEN AGAINST
GUN VIOLENCE**



YOUTH ALIVE!

FACT SHEET

Owner-Authorized Handguns AB 2235 (DeSaulnier)

AB 2235 would require all newly manufactured or imported handguns in California to be “owner-authorized,” or personalized in a way that would allow them to be fired only by authorized persons. This requirement will take effect eighteen months following the release of a report by the California Attorney General that owner-authorized handguns are available for retail sale.

Summary

Biometric (fingerprint or grip recognition) technologies are now available for use in manufacturing handguns. These technologies would ensure that a handgun is only fired by the owner or an authorized user. Applying personalization technology to handguns would render them inoperable by unauthorized persons – including children and thieves – thereby helping to prevent both unintentional and intentional gun violence. Injuries, homicides, suicides, and accidental shootings could be significantly reduced in California. The illegal transfer of firearms could also be reduced.

The Technology

An owner-authorized handgun has technology that renders the firearm inoperable except when activated by the lawful owner or an authorized user. AB 2235 would require that this personalization technology be a permanent programmable biometric feature that is part of the gun’s original design and manufacture and cannot be readily deactivated.

Biometric technology provides a method for uniquely recognizing persons based upon one or more intrinsic physical traits. Biometric technologies, such as fingerprint or grip recognition, are already widely used in other applications and consumer products, including computers, cell phones, credit cards and door locks. New Jersey has a related handgun personalization law.ⁱ

Owner-Authorized Handguns Would Help Prevent Gun Deaths and Injuries

Children and Teens

An owner-authorized handgun could not be fired by a child or teen unless authorized by the parent or legal guardian, thereby establishing some parental control over the weapon. This would help prevent young people from accidentally shooting themselves and others, or committing suicide or homicide with handguns.

- Every day in the U.S., 8 children and teenagers are killed and more than 47 are injured by a firearm.ⁱⁱ
- In 2005, 595 California children and youth under age 21 were killed with firearms and 1,554 California children and youth under age 21 were hospitalized with nonfatal firearms injuries.ⁱⁱⁱ
- One-third of U.S. children live in homes with firearms. Almost half of homes with children and firearms keep a gun unlocked.^{iv}
- 68% of the attackers in school shootings obtained the gun(s) from their own home or that of a relative. 61% of the attackers used handguns.^v
- Many young children, including children as young as three years old, are strong enough to fire a handgun.^{vi}
- A 2003 study of 117 firearms deaths revealed that 37% could have been prevented by a personalized handgun.^{vii}



Suicide

Despondent teens, or other depressed individuals who are not authorized users, would be unable to commit suicide with a personalized handgun.

- Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death of children and teens; over 43% are committed with firearms.^{viii}
- In 2005, more than two young lives per day were lost to completed firearm-related suicide.^{ix}

Stolen Guns

A stolen personalized gun could not be fired by an unauthorized user.

- Every year about 500,000 guns, including over 200,000 handguns, are stolen and fall into criminal hands.^x

Illegal Guns

Owner authorized handguns acquired through gun traffickers, straw purchasers, theft and other illegal transactions would be inoperable by criminals and other persons to whom they are transferred. Illegally obtained guns are often used in crime.

- Handguns are the weapons of choice for criminals. A 2006 FBI report concludes that 7,795 murders were committed with handguns out of a total of 10,177 firearms murders.^{xi}

Financial Benefits

The medical costs of gun violence place a terrible burden on health services, governments, and taxpayers. Owner-authorized handguns would help prevent gun violence and reduce this economic burden on society.

- Of \$4 billion in medical costs due to gun violence in 1995, the public paid about 85%.^{xii}
- Including indirect costs, gun violence costs the U.S. over \$100 billion annually.^{xiii}
- The medical cost of nonfatal hospital admitted firearm injuries in California in 2003 was \$192,376,500.^{xiv}

Public Support

Consumer product modifications, such as child-proof caps on medicine and pool covers, have reduced injuries and saved lives. A product as inherently dangerous as a handgun should also be designed to prevent unauthorized use.

- Approximately 74% of adults in U.S. households favor legislation requiring owner-authorized technology for all new handguns.^{xv}

Since the 1950s, there has been a concerted effort to make automobiles safer by design. Consequently, vehicle fatalities per mile driven have been reduced by more than 80%^{xvi}. Similarly, changes in the design of handguns could significantly reduce firearm injury and death.

ⁱ In 2002, New Jersey enacted a law banning the sale of non-personalized handguns by licensed manufacturers and dealers after personalization technology is deemed available for retail sale. N.J. Stat. Ann. Sections 2C:39-1dd, 2C:58-2, 2C:58-2.2 - 2C:58-2-5.

ⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS [online]. Available from: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/, 2005 fatal injury data; 2006 nonfatal injury data.

ⁱⁱⁱ California Dept. of Public Health, EPIC Branch, Firearm Injuries, 2005, Fatal Injuries and Nonfatal Hospitalized Injuries, California Residents, http://www.applications.dhs.ca.gov/epicdata/content/ST_firearm.htm. Excludes legal intervention deaths.

^{iv} Schuster, M., et al, Firearms Storage Patterns in US Homes With Children, *Am. Journal of Public Health*, April 2000, Vol. 90, No. 4.

^v The Final Report and Findings of the Safe Schools Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States, U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Dept. of Education, May 2002, p. 15 and p. 27

^{vi} Naureckas, S.M. et al, Children's and Women's Ability to Fire Handguns, 149 *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 1318-1322 (1995).

^{vii} Vernick, J.S. et al., *Unintentional and Undetermined Firearm Related Deaths: A Preventable Death Analysis for Three Safety Devices*, 9 *Inj. Prevention* 307, 308 (2003).

^{viii} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centers for Injury Prevention and Control, WISQARS [online]. Available from: www.cdc.gov/ncipc/wisqars/, 2005 data.

^{ix} Id.

^x Cook, P.J., and Ludwig, J. *Guns in America: Results of a Comprehensive Survey of Gun Ownership and Use*. Washington, DC: The Police Foundation, 1996

^{xi} *Crime in the United States 2006*, FBI, Criminal Justice Information Services Division, Expanded Homicide Data tables 7 and 10.

^{xii} Linda Gunderson, "The Financial Costs of Gun Violence", 131, *Annals of Internal Medicine* 483 (1999).

^{xiii} Cook, P. and J. Ludwig, The Costs of Gun Violence Against Children. *The Future of Children*, Children, Youth and Gun Violence, 2002, Vol. 12 No. 2. Also see Cook, P. and J. Ludwig, *Gun Violence: The Real Costs*, Oxford University Press, 2000.

^{xiv} Children's Safety Network Economics and Data Analysis Resource Center at Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), Calverton MD in conjunction with the West Virginia Injury Control Research Center, August 2006. Year 2005 dollars, based on year 2003 incidence. Available from: <http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/icrc/AHQFORM.asp>

^{xv} Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research (JHCGPR), National Opinion Research Center. Fall 1998 *National Gun Policy Survey, JHCGPR, 1999*

^{xvi} David Hemenway, *Private Guns*, Public Health 17 (University of Michigan Press 2004).