



Iowa HSB 254: Background Check Repeal and Permitless Carry

Bottom Line: The gun lobby is pushing a radical and dangerous bill in Iowa that would threaten public safety by repealing Iowa's law requiring background checks on handgun sales and Iowa's law requiring a permit to carry a concealed handgun in public. Iowa lawmakers should put the security of their constituents first and reject this dangerous assault on public safety.

- ❑ **Background Check Repeal: HSB 254 would repeal Iowa's background check law and make it easy for felons, domestic abusers, and people prohibited based on mental illnesses to buy handguns in Iowa.**
 - Twenty-two states, including Iowa, have laws requiring a person to pass a criminal background check before buying a handgun.¹ State laws requiring background checks for all handgun sales are associated with lower firearm homicide rates,² lower firearm suicide rates,³ and lower rates of firearm trafficking.⁴
 - **HSB 254** would repeal Iowa's background check requirement and let people buy handguns without first passing a criminal background check. By eliminating this crucial public safety law, the bill would make it easy for people with dangerous histories—including **felons, domestic abusers, and people prohibited based on mental illnesses**—to buy handguns in Iowa.
 - Requiring background checks on all gun sales is proven to reduce gun violence. When Connecticut enacted a law requiring all handgun buyers to pass a background check both at the point of sale and as part of a permit process, it was associated with a 40 percent reduction in the gun homicide rate⁵ and a 15 percent reduction in the gun suicide rate.⁶ By contrast, when Missouri repealed its purchase permit law requiring background checks, the state experienced an up to 27 percent increase in its firearm homicide rate⁷ and a 16 percent increase in its firearm suicide rate.⁸
 - A 2020 poll found that Iowa voters overwhelmingly support stronger gun laws by a nearly 4:1 margin, and the majority of respondents believe that the need for background checks on all gun sales is more important during the pandemic.⁹
- ❑ **Permitless Carry: HSB 254 would make it legal for people—including people with dangerous histories—to carry hidden, loaded handguns in public in Iowa without a permit or safety training.**
 - In the vast majority of states, including Iowa,¹⁰ a person must acquire a permit in order to legally carry a concealed handgun in public. These permits ensure that certain core public safety standards are preserved when people carry concealed handguns in public places.
 - **Eighty-eight percent** of Americans think a person should get a permit before carrying a concealed gun in public.¹¹
 - HSB 254 would repeal Iowa's permit requirement and let people carry concealed handguns in public **without a permit or safety training**.



- By eliminating the permit requirement, the bill would lower the bar for who may legally carry concealed guns in public in Iowa—to include people with dangerous histories,¹² **convicted stalkers, and people who may have never fired a handgun.**

¹ CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, HI, IL, IA, MD, MA, MI, NE, NM, NV, NJ, NY, NC, OR, PA, RI, VA, VT, and WA.

² Michael Siegel and Claire Boine, *What Are the Most Effective Policies in Reducing Gun Homicides?* Albany, NY: Rockefeller Institute of Government, March 2019. <https://bit.ly/2YPAz7P>.

³ Eric W. Fleegler, Lois K. Lee, Michael C. Monuteaux, David Hemenway, and Rebekah Mannix, "Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Fatalities in the United States," *JAMA Internal Medicine* 173, no. 9 (2013): 732-740.

⁴ Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, and Maria T. Bulzacchelli, "Effects of State-Level Firearm Seller Accountability Policies on Firearm Trafficking," *Journal of Urban Health* 86, no. 4 (July 2009): 525-537. Federal law bars felons from having firearms but does not bar misdemeanors outside the domestic violence context. Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, Emma Beth McGinty, and Ted Alcorn, "Preventing the Diversion of Guns to Criminals Through Effective Firearm Sales Laws," in *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis*, 109-121. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.

⁵ Kara E. Rudolph, Elizabeth A. Stuart, Jon S. Vernick, and Daniel W. Webster, "Association Between Connecticut's Permit-to-Purchase Handgun Law and Homicides," *American Journal of Public Health* 105, no. 8 (2015): 49-54.

⁶ Cassandra K. Crifasi, John Speed Meyers, Jon S. Vernick, and Daniel W. Webster, "Effects of Changes in Permit-to-Purchase Handgun Laws in Connecticut and Missouri on Suicide Rates," *Preventive Medicine* 79 (2015): 43-49.

⁷ Raiden Hasegawa, Daniel W. Webster, and Dylan Small, "Evaluating Missouri's Handgun Purchaser Law: A Bracketing Method for Addressing Concerns About History Interacting with Group," *Epidemiology* 30, no. 3, (May 2019): 371-379.

⁸ Cassandra K. Crifasi, John Speed Meyers, Jon S. Vernick, and Daniel W. Webster, "Effects of Changes in Permit-to-Purchase Handgun Laws in Connecticut and Missouri on Suicide Rates," *Preventive Medicine* 79 (2015): 43-49.

⁹ Everytown for Gun Safety. "New Pre-election Polling in Iowa Finds That Gun Safety is a Winning Issue in Key Races Across the State, Where Everytown Spent More Than \$3.8 Million." November 1, 2020. <https://bit.ly/3uBpVLx>.

¹⁰ Iowa Code § 724.4.

¹¹ Ingham K. "New Survey Finds Strong Opposition to Concealed Carry without a Permit". *Strategies* 360. (2015). <https://every.tw/2tSNDyq>.

¹² Under current law, a permit to carry weapons shall not be issued to a person when "probable cause exists to believe, based upon documented specific actions of the person, where at least one of the actions occurred within two years immediately preceding the date of the permit application, that the person is likely to use a weapon unlawfully or in such other manner as would endanger the person's self or others." Iowa Code § 724.8(3).