

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 891
Judiciary

(Delegate Saab, *et al.*)

Handgun Permits - Firearms Training Courses

This bill reduces the number of hours of instruction by a qualified handgun instructor that an applicant for a permit to wear, carry, or transport a handgun must complete as part of the required firearms training course. For an initial application, the requirement is reduced from a minimum of 16 hours to a minimum of 6 hours. For a renewal application, the requirement is reduced from 8 hours to 2 hours.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill's requirements should not affect the operations or finances of any State law enforcement agency.

Local Effect: None. The bill's requirements should not affect the operations or finances of any local law enforcement agency.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Generally, with certain exceptions, to be issued a handgun permit by the Secretary of State Police, an applicant (1) must be 18 or older; (2) must not have been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor for which a sentence of imprisonment for more than one year has been imposed or, if convicted, must have been pardoned or been granted relief under federal law; (3) must not have been convicted of a controlled dangerous substance violation and must not presently be an addict, a habitual user of a controlled dangerous substance, or an alcoholic; (4) must not exhibit a propensity for violence or instability which may reasonably render possession of a handgun a danger to the applicant or another;

(5) must have successfully completed, prior to application and each renewal, a specified firearms training course approved by the Secretary; (6) if younger than 30, must not have been committed to a facility for juveniles for longer than one year or adjudicated delinquent for a crime of violence, a felony, or misdemeanor that carries a statutory penalty of more than two years; and (7) must have a good and substantial reason to wear, carry, or transport a handgun. “Good and substantial reason” includes a finding that the permit is necessary as a reasonable precaution against apprehended danger. The Secretary may limit the geographic area, circumstances, or times of day, week, month, or year in which a permit is effective.

A handgun permit applicant must successfully complete, prior to the application and each renewal, a firearms training course approved by the Secretary that includes (1) for an initial application, a minimum of 16 hours of instruction by a qualified handgun instructor, or 8 hours of instruction for a renewal application; (2) classroom instruction on State firearm law, home firearm safety, and handgun mechanisms and operation; and (3) a firearms qualification component that demonstrates the applicant’s proficiency and use of the firearm.

An applicant for a permit is not required to complete a certified firearms training course if the applicant:

- is a law enforcement officer or a person who is retired in good standing from service with a law enforcement agency of the United States, the State, or any local law enforcement agency in the State;
- is a member, retired member, or honorably discharged member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard;
- is a qualified handgun instructor; or
- has completed a firearms training course approved by the Secretary.

A handgun permit application costs \$75; two years after the initial permit and every three years thereafter, a \$50 renewal fee is due. In addition, the applicant must pay for fingerprint-based federal and State criminal history background checks for an initial application. A person who applies for a renewal of a handgun permit is not required to be fingerprinted unless the Secretary requires a set of the person’s fingerprints to resolve a question of the person’s identity.

A permit to carry, wear, or transport a handgun expires on the last day of the holder’s birth month following two years after the date the permit is issued. A permit may be renewed for successive periods of three years each if, at the time of an application for renewal, the applicant possesses the qualifications for the issuance of a permit and pays the renewal fee.

Background: In 2016, the Department of State Police received 3,965 new applications for a handgun permit and 4,210 handgun permit renewal applications. There are currently approximately 17,800 active handgun permits in the State. It generally takes less than 2 days to receive the results of a national criminal history records check from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and approximately 90 days to process, investigate, and issue a permit.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Montgomery and Prince George's counties; City of Bowie; Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 9, 2017
mm/lgc

Analysis by: Shirleen M. E. Pilgrim

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510