

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 875
Judiciary

(Delegate Rey, *et al.*)

Firearms - Handgun Qualification License - Firearms Safety Training

This bill repeals the requirement that the firearms safety training course required for a Handgun Qualification License (HQL) include a firearms orientation component that demonstrates a person's safe operation and handling of a firearm. In addition, the bill requires the Secretary of State Police to adopt regulations that allow an applicant for an HQL to receive online all necessary instruction from a required firearms safety training course.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill's changes can be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 427 of 2013 (the Firearm Safety Act of 2013) created a new licensing scheme for handguns under the licensing authority of the Department of State Police (DSP). An HQL authorizes a person to purchase, rent, or receive a handgun. A licensed firearms manufacturer, a specified active or retired law enforcement officer, a member or retired member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard, and a person purchasing, renting, or receiving an antique, curio, or relic firearm (as defined under federal law) are exempt from the requirements of the licensing provisions.

The Secretary of State Police must apply for a State and national criminal history records check for each applicant. As part of the application for a criminal history records check, the Secretary must submit one complete set of fingerprints of the applicant.

The application fee for an HQL is to cover administrative costs and may be up to \$50. (DSP has set the fee at \$50.) The term of the license is 10 years. License renewal fees are set at up to \$20. (DSP has set the renewal fee at \$20.) Generally, the Secretary of State Police must issue an HQL to a person who (1) is at least age 21; (2) is a State resident; (3) has completed a firearms safety training course; and (4) is not prohibited by federal or State law from purchasing or possessing a handgun.

The firearms safety training course must include (1) a minimum of four hours of instruction by a qualified handgun instructor; (2) classroom instruction on State firearm law, home firearm safety, and handgun mechanisms and operation; and (3) a firearms orientation that demonstrates that the person can safely operate and handle a firearm. An applicant is not required to complete an approved firearms safety training course if the applicant has previously completed a certified firearms training course, has completed a hunting safety course prescribed by the Department of Natural Resources, is currently a qualified handgun instructor, is an honorably discharged member of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard, is a certain employee of an armored car company, or lawfully owns a regulated firearm. Renewal applicants are not required to complete the firearms safety training course or submit to a State and national criminal history records check.

The Secretary may issue an HQL without an additional application or fee to a person who meets the requirements for the issuance of a handgun permit who does not already have an HQL.

Background: In 2016, DSP received 28,039 applications for an HQL. DSP disapproved 574 applicants.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

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mm/lgc

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