

**Department of Fiscal Services**  
Maryland General Assembly

**FISCAL NOTE**

Senate Bill 351 (Senator Ferguson)  
Judicial Proceedings

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**Handgun Permits - Course Requirements - Qualified Instructors**

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This bill eliminates the requirements that a person have a “good and substantial reason” for getting a handgun permit and not exhibit “a propensity for violence or instability.” It requires an applicant for a handgun permit to complete a handgun instruction course, and requires that an applicant be at least 21 years old. In addition, the Department of State Police must issue a permit within 45 days and certify and regulate handgun instructors. Restrictions may not be placed on handgun permits.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** Indeterminate but potentially significant increase in general fund revenues and expenditures.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** Meaningful effect on those small businesses that provide handgun instruction as discussed below.

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**Fiscal Analysis**

**Background:** Under current law, a handgun permit application costs \$75; a \$50 renewal is required every two years. There are 19,519 people in Maryland licensed to carry a handgun. In 1996, the State Police issued approximately 1,200 initial handgun permits.

It currently takes a minimum of 60 to 90 days to receive the results of a national criminal history record check from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

**State Effect:** Based on information from the Department of State Police, the Department of

Fiscal Services estimates that it costs \$189 to process a handgun permit application and issue a license. As the fee for a handgun permit is \$75, it costs the State Police an estimated \$114 per application. This includes salaries, fringe benefits, equipment, and administrative costs. The renewal application fee of \$50 equals the cost.

The State Police estimate that elimination of the requirements that a person have a “good and substantial reason” for carrying a firearm and not show a “propensity for violence or instability,” and eliminating restrictions on permits, will lead to an increase of 9,800 applications annually in each of the next five years, even after accounting for a small decrease since people age 18 through 20 will no longer be eligible. At a net cost of \$114 per application, and accounting for the October 1 effective date, general fund expenditures could exceed revenues by \$838,000 in fiscal 1998, and \$1.12 million annually thereafter. The Department of Fiscal Services advises that any such increase would depend upon the actual number of permit applications and cannot be reliably estimated at this time.

The bill requires the State Police to issue a permit within 45 days. Because the national criminal history record check takes at least 60 days, it is assumed that the State Police will be required to revoke permits that have been issued to those people with a criminal record. It is assumed that this can be done with existing resources.

The State Police are required to certify handgun instructors and issue instructor’s cards. This can be handled with existing budgeted resources.

**Small Business Effect:** There are an estimated 230 handgun instructors in the State, the majority of which are assumed to be small businesses. The bill requires that the State Police certify and regulate handgun instructors. In order to be issued a certified handgun instructor’s permit, an applicant must have had formal training in the care, safety, and use of handguns; have achieved a score of 80% on a fire range test as a practical police course; and have taught a course in the care, safety, and use of handguns for at least one year. These requirements may restrict new handgun instructors from entering the profession and may increase the cost of doing business.

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**Information Source(s):** Department of State Police, Department of Fiscal Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - March 10, 1997

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Analysis by: Shelley Finlayson

Reviewed by: John Rixey

Direct Inquiries to:

John Rixey, Coordinating Analyst

(410) 841-3710

(301) 858-3710