

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2018 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 196 (Senator Hough, *et al.*)
Judicial Proceedings

Public Safety - Handgun Qualification License - Issuance With Permit to Carry,
Wear, or Transport

This bill requires, rather than authorizes, the Secretary of State Police to issue a handgun qualification license (HQL) without an additional application or fee to a person who meets the requirements for the issuance of a handgun permit and who does not already have an HQL.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill codifies existing practice.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: 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. Current law requirements and background relating to the issuance of handgun permits is summarized in the **Appendix – Handgun Permit Requirements – Current Law/Background**.

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. The term of the license is 10 years. License renewal fees are set at up to \$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.

Within 30 days after receiving a properly completed HQL application, the Secretary must provide (1) an HQL, if approved or (2) a written denial of the application including the reason the application was denied and a statement of the applicant's appeal rights regarding the decision.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

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

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nb/lgc

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Appendix

Handgun Permit Requirements – Current Law/Background

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.

Generally a handgun permit expires on the last day of the holder's birth month following two years after the date the permit is issued; however, the Secretary may establish an alternative expiration date for a permit to coincide with the expiration of a private detective license, a security guard certification, or a special police officer commission. 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.

In 2017, the Department of State Police (DSP) received 4,327 new applications for handgun permits and 4,513 handgun permit renewal applications. DSP denied 411 applications in the same year. There are currently approximately 20,043 active handgun permits in the State. It generally takes less than two 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.