



Written by [James Heiser](#) on April 14, 2011

## Illinois House Acts to Protect Gun Owners

The Illinois legislature has taken an important step to protect the rights of gun owners, reining in a move by state Attorney General Lisa Madigan which disclosed the names of 1.3 million residents who currently hold a state-issued Firearm Owner Identification (FOID) card. The passage of House Bill 3500 sent the measure to the state Senate, where it has received 10 sponsors.



As [previously reported](#), the Attorney General made the decision to make the names of FOID holders public when the Associated Press made a request for the list. The AP claimed "that the list of FOID cardholders is public record and must be disclosed. The permit holders' addresses and telephone numbers would remain private." However, given the ease with which one may quickly link a name to an address in this Information Age, the attempt by the Associated Press to simply dismiss the obvious concerns for the privacy — and the safety — of gun owners in Illinois was not credible.

Now, the Illinois House has approved a bill by an overwhelming majority (98-12) which would address these concerns for the safety of FOID holders. [FoxNews.com reports](#) regarding the measure which will go to the state Senate on April 15:

Republican state Rep. Richard Morthland, the sponsor of the bill, told FoxNews.com the dispute will probably be resolved legislatively.

"(Madigan's) job is to interpret the law. Our job is to make the policy," he said. Gun-rights advocates have raised concern that publishing the names of gun owners would pose a safety risk — since it could be used to determine which people don't own weapons.

Morthland said there are "problems" with the identification system and that reporters have "legitimate reasons" for wanting information about it. "But that doesn't mean you should give out the private information of individual citizens who are complying with the law," he said.

The Illinois Sheriffs' Association (ISA) was among the law enforcement organizations that actively opposed the Attorney General's reckless plan. The president of the ISA, [Robert Hertz, declared](#) that making the names of FOID holders public would be "providing a virtual menu of opportunities for would-be burglars, home invaders or others looking to take advantage of citizens."

Morthland is right to say that there are "problems" with the FOID system — the leading problem being



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the existence of such registration. Sadly, of late Illinois has a history of trying to restrict the constitutionally-protected liberty of its citizens. The FOID system has done little to make people more safe since it was instituted in 1968, but it has made them demonstrably less free. Certainly the existence of FOID cards has done nothing to stop criminals from obtaining firearms, and Madigan's policy would simply have made it easier for the criminals to go on getting even more weapons. [As Lee Williams wrote for the Illinois Policy Institute](#): "Only OxyContin is easier for criminals to resell than stolen firearms, because every criminal wants a gun, and they can't get them through legitimate means. For the bad guys, Madigan's List will be better than a discount shopping mall. It guarantees success, no more dry holes."

The legislative action blocking release of the names of FOID holders would at least protect citizens from a further violation of their rights. What is needed is to scrap a system which has needlessly restricted the rights of the people, and placed them in danger of having their names disclosed to criminals in the first place.



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