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New Jersey to Start Statewide Gun Buyback Program

The state-wide gun buyback bill headed for New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy's desk, A-2374, [contains dangerous language](#). The state's attorney general would be obligated to hold "at least" three gun buybacks every year throughout the state. The bill's sponsor wants nine. Now that anti-gun Democrat Phil Murphy is governor, he is likely to press for even more.



State Senator Linda Greenstein (D-Middlesex) sponsored the bill and declared that "There's nothing more important. If guns are hanging around the street, they're going to fall into the wrong hands for sure, and we want to get as many of them off the street as we can."

Greenstein's message is clear: Guns are evil, gun owners are bad people, and firearms seem to "hang around the street" in vast numbers, implying that criminals can easily pick them up and use them to commit gun violence.

The reality is that gun buyback programs are fraudulent and worthless in reducing crime. Even the name is deceitful: It implies that the government is buying back guns that it originally owned and then sold. They offer taxpayer-funded incentives to lawful gun owners (criminals don't apply) to offload worthless relics that have been collecting dust in their attics for years. It also gives newcomers to New Jersey a welcome opportunity to unload firearms that they owned but which turned them into criminals immediately thanks to New Jersey's draconian anti-gun laws. They don't want to become another "test case" for the governor's generosity, like Shaneen Allen, a Pennsylvania resident who spent months in jail for violating the state's law prior to being pardoned by Governor Christie. New Jersey's new governor, Phil Murphy, who takes office today, is likely to be far less forgiving.

The bill, once signed into law, will take an estimated \$2 million of New Jersey's taxpayers' money to fund. It won't work, and even the bill's supporters know it. Said Assemblyman Lou Greenwald (D-Camden/Burlington): "Some people will find any reason to attack proposals meant to protect the public from gun violence. This bill would simply give gun owners who want to get rid of their weapons another avenue to do so. Surely this is something even they can get behind."

That's one of the benefits of sponsoring such a bill. Anti-gun politicians get to burnish their anti-gun credentials among their supporters while using other people's money to do so. It gives the impression that at least they are doing "something" about gun violence, even if that something turns out to be nothing.

This isn't the first time New Jersey has experimented with gun buyback programs. A program in Camden in 2012 netted 1,137 firearms, while Newark collected more than 200 in 2013. That same year, Essex County collected about 1,700 firearms in a buyback scheme. Last summer, about 4,700 firearms were turned in during a buyback program encompassing Camden, Trenton, and Newark. That



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particular program set taxpayers back half a million dollars. But New Jersey's Attorney General Christopher Porrino said it was worth it even if it was unlikely to have any impact on gun violence: "To think that we're going to have a gun buyback and this is going to end gun crime in New Jersey is naïve." But they went ahead with the program anyway, adding, "It's one tool in the tool box and right now we have every tool out and we're using them all."

Even if the tool is dull, expensive, and worthless. The first gun buyback program in the United States took place in Baltimore in 1974. It was deemed a failure when gun homicides and assaults rose during the two-month program. But no one bothered to check the impact of such programs until 1992 when a study following a gun buyback program in Seattle found that the "effect on decreasing violent crime and reducing firearm mortality is unknown."

What is known is this: Criminals in general aren't likely to participate. Why would they, when a better way to dispose of an offending firearm is simply to dump it in the river? What's also known is that there are an estimated three million gun owners in New Jersey, and the total firearms redeemed through previous phony buyback programs is — ready? — an astonishing 7,700. That's one-quarter of one percent.

What's also dangerous about the bill the governor is about to sign into law: It could be made mandatory, which would change the game completely. Once the force of government enters the picture, law-abiding gun owners would see the real purpose behind such benign and statistically worthless schemes: Since voluntary turn-ins aren't working to reduce gun violence, then making them mandatory most certainly would, at least in the minds of people such as Greenstein.

Gun owners and others involved in the freedom fight must not overlook the opportunity for mischief inherent in such apparent foolishness as gun buyback programs. Jefferson was right: "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

Photo: Jannoon028/Getty Images

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