



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on November 21, 2014

Blowback Against Washington State's Anti-gun Initiative Just Beginning

Despite opposition from individual gun owners, Washington State sheriffs, the state's Republican Party, and the National Rifle Association, Initiative 594 [passed easily](#) on Tuesday, November 4, by 59 percent to 41 percent, with Bloomberg's money promoting myths about it.



This makes Washington the seventh state (along with the District of Columbia) to require universal background checks not only on all sales of firearms but on "transfers" as well, even between friends. Washington is the first state to pass such restrictions through a citizen-driven initiative.

Largely unknown to voters, the complex 18-page initiative also greatly expands the state's handgun registration program, with every sale or transfer of a handgun resulting in every party having his or her name entered into the state's Department of Licensing database.

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One of the many myths circulated widely about the initiative was that it would keep criminals from obtaining firearms on the open market such as at gun shows. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, however, in a report issued in May, 2013, 77 percent of state prison inmates who are in jail for gun crimes acquired their weapons through "street" sources which included "theft or burglary," drug dealers, and fences operating in the black or underground market. That i594 would have no effect in such acquisitions seemed to be lost on Washington State's voters.

Initiative 594 regulates all sales and transfers of firearms in the state. As the NRA noted in one of its broadsheets:

i594 would regulate transfers — not just sales — of all firearms in the Evergreen State.

That means, if a friend wants to try your gun at the range, you would have to broker the transfer through a gun dealer, with all the accompanying fees, paperwork, use taxes and, in the case of handguns, state registration.

i594 also doubles the state's waiting period on handgun sales from 5 to 10 days and extends it to every private transfer of a handgun.

The Washington State Republican Party came out and publicly opposed the initiative as well:

While supporters of i594 claim it is about "background checks," actually it is an 18-page document of complex regulations and restrictions that pose a severe danger to our Second Amendment rights, and criminalizes the actions of law-abiding gun owners.



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None of the modern mass shootings would have been prevented by the regulations in this initiative. I594 would expand the state government database of lawful handgun owners and, in sweeping language, would severely restrict private loans and transfers of guns between friends or relatives.

Washington State sheriffs enlisted in the effort to inform voters as well. Claiming that the initiative would not make a citizen safer, enforcing it would strain law enforcement resources, criminalize previously lawful behavior of gun owners, and would essentially be unenforceable. Said Sheriff Alan Botzheim of Pend Orielle County: "i594 is focused on honest hardworking citizens ... making them criminals when they are not criminals."

Said Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich of Spokane County: "i594 is just another attempt to erode the Second Amendment," while Sheriff Frank Rogers of Okanogan County claimed that "i594 will do nothing to stop the bad guys... it just puts more of a burden on the folks [who] follow the law."

Sheriff Pete Warner of Ferry County was blunt:

I wholeheartedly oppose i-594. It's just stupid. It penalizes the honest and law-abiding citizens and does nothing to keep the criminals from having firearms.

Firearms instructors saw through the fog surrounding the initiative as well. One noted:

I594 is a law so broadly written that it *clearly is designed to make criminals of all recreational shooters and most law enforcement officers.* [Emphasis added.]

One of those instructors, Anette Wachter, also known as "30 Cal Gal" and a winner of 24 international shooting trophies, said that under the initiative, "even in a gun store the employee can't hand me a gun to look at." She explained further:

The rifles that we as coaches loan out to new junior shooters and new competitors will have to be returned. We will have to shut down the program. No more coaching.

The parents and their kids who wanted to get involved in a shooting sport and can't afford the gear are hosed.

Sorry to all of my friends who wanted me to teach them safe gun handling and go recreational shooting. We will be criminals now.

Sorry to any over 18-year-old family member or friend who wants to go hunting with me and needs to borrow a gun. We will be criminals now.

Sorry family members who[m] I was planning on giving ... a gift for self-defense or sport. We will be criminals now.

Implementation of the law begins on December 4, 2014, forcing some museums to return loaned firearms to their owners. Said Jennifer Kilmer, director of the Washington State Historical Society, the new initiative "may impact our ability to accept future donations of firearms to our collection," while backers of the initiative said that was certainly not their intention.

One of those offended by the new initiative couldn't care less about becoming a criminal under the new law is Gavin Seims, who is promoting his "[I Will Not Comply](#)" position on his website and inviting those of like mind to join with him in a public protest in front of the state capitol building on December 13. He plans to flaunt his disregard for the new law by trading, buying, and selling firearms in full view of the public (and the press who will no doubt be covering the event which is expected to be attended by upwards of 5,000 protesters). Seim is asking those supporters also to sign his Declaration of Affirmation



which states, in part:

We declare that the right of self-defense is natural. As the framers affirmed and sealed with blood, so we affirm that our right to keep and bear arms is granted by the Supreme Ruler of the Universe and may not be restricted in any fashion.

We, the masters of a government by consent of the governed, armed and ready, declare to our legislators and fellow citizens that no act of government, nor vote of the public, carries any authority to remove, dilute or hinder any of the peoples' rights....

We call for peace and principle, but we will not back down and we will no longer tolerate those who trample our absolute and indisputable rights. We pledge our blood. We will not comply.

This may be one unintended consequence of the new initiative that few expected: a public display of disobedience to and flaunting of the new law right in front of the capitol building. While a firebrand such as Seim might be faulted for some of his statements, no one can fault him for his anger against the intrusions Washington State citizens have inflicted upon themselves with the overwhelming passage of Initiative 594.

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics. He can be reached at badelman@thenewamerican.com



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