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Democrats Propose Massive Tax Hike on Guns and Ammo

In an effort to reignite the gun-control debate, two Democratic lawmakers are proposing massive tax hikes on handguns and ammunition, while linking the revenues with programs to prevent gun violence. Sponsored by Reps. Bill Pascrell (D-N.J.) and Danny K. Davis (D-Ill.), the [“Gun Violence Prevention and Safe Communities Act”](#) is ambitious, to say the least, as it would nearly double the current 11-percent tax on handguns, while lifting the tax on bullets and cartridges from 11 percent to 50 percent.



Articles taxable at 20 percent under the proposed legislation would include pistols, revolvers, and any “lower frame or receiver for a firearm, whether for a semiautomatic pistol, rifle, or shotgun that is designed to accommodate interchangeable upper receivers.” Meanwhile, taxes on firearm shells and cartridges would rise a whopping 40 percent.

In addition, the gun transfer tax would more than double under the legislation, upping the levy on all weapons (excluding antique firearms) covered under the National Firearms Act from \$200 to \$500.

“As a former mayor of one of the largest cities in New Jersey, I know how critical the issue of reducing gun violence is to our communities,” Rep. Pascrell, co-Chair of the House Law Enforcement Caucus, [said](#) of the legislation. “This bill represents a major investment in the protection of our children and our communities, and reflects the long-term societal costs of gun and ammunition purchases in our country.”

The two lawmakers claim their legislation would generate \$600 million per year, and would be used to support law-enforcement measures and gun-violence prevention programs. According to a press release published on Rep. Pascrell’s website, the bill would allocate revenues in the following manner:

The Gun Violence Prevention and Safe Communities Act will direct the estimated \$600 million in new revenue to programs designed to make communities safer and reduce violence, including: Project Safe Neighborhood Grants; Community-Oriented Policing Grants; Community-Based Violence Prevention Initiative Grants; research into the causes and prevention of gun violence via the Center[s] for Disease Control’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; the National Criminal History Improvement Program; the NICS Record Improvement Program; and grants to encourage schools and districts to implement comprehensive, evidence-based discipline systems to improve school climate.

Considering the bill’s glaring demands — and the fact that it’s being proposed in the Republican-controlled House — critics predict defeat for the measure. “I doubt this bill will pass, but we will lobby against it if need be,” declared Alan Gottlieb, who chairs the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms. “This is simply another shot against gun owners in this country.”

“What the anti-gun interests can’t ban, they want to tax it out of existence,” he added. “It’s nothing



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more than confiscatory taxation.”

Still, Reps. Davis and Pascrell’s bill could mark a change in gun-control strategy by anti-gun lawmakers. Courts continue to rule in favor of Americans’ rights to bear arms. Increasing taxes on guns and ammo, however, could be a backdoor to new gun-control policies.

Davis, who represents parts of Chicago that have been ravaged by gun violence in recent years, claims the new taxes are critical to purging violent crimes in his district. In a press release, he stated:

Gun violence in America has reached epidemic proportions and we cannot, as a nation, any longer tolerate the on-going social and economic costs of inaction. Gun violence is a daily reality for America and, in particular, for urban cities like Chicago. The crisis should outrage us all. This legislation is a pro-active approach to reducing gun violence by using proven preventive programs which have been starved for funds until now. As part of a comprehensive, multidimensional strategy to reduce gun violence, this legislation closes major loopholes in tax law and lays out an equitable, long term, sustainable strategy to provide the requisite resources.

Of course, Davis fails to correlate the soaring crime rates in his city with the severe gun-control laws that restrict citizens from protecting their own life and property. Indeed, Chicago has some of the strictest gun-control laws in the nation, yet homicides and other gun-related crimes are as prevalent as ever.

Illinois, for example, was the [last state](#) in the country to adopt a concealed carry gun law, which was passed earlier this summer. The state also has rigid background-check laws that help keep guns out of the hands of law-abiding citizens. This gun-control tactic, according to critics, only makes violent crimes more prevalent.

“Gun control policies don’t work because they disarm citizens while keeping criminals in possession of guns,” [writes](#) Charlie Vidal of PolicyMic. “Chicago’s strict policies have effectively given lawbreakers a [monopoly on weapons](#) in many parts of the city that the Chicago Police Department cannot or will not police effectively.”

A good contrast to Chicago for a natural experiment is Houston, Vidal asserts, as Houston has similar socioeconomic factors, such as density, population, and segregation. Like Chicago, Houston is a major hub for crimes such as human trafficking and drug trade. In terms of homicides, however, Houston has [two-thirds](#) the rate that Chicago has.

“This is because the people of Houston are well armed, while innocents in Chicago have been condemned to be sitting ducks,” Vidal explains.

While this comparison specifically addresses gun-control laws, taxes on firearms are a form of gun regulation, as they hinder law-abiding citizens from arming themselves. After all, nearly doubling the tax on gun purchases, combined with a 40-percent hike on ammo, is certainly nothing to sneeze at.



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