



Written by [James Heiser](#) on February 24, 2012

Illinois Politicians Plot New Assaults on Gun Ownership

This time, according to critics, they are attempting to interfere with the free exercise of Second Amendment liberties by simply taxing gun ownership and use beyond the means of many residents.

Taxation has often been used as a means of social coercion; so-called "[sin taxes](#)" on alcohol and cigarettes, for example, have been used as a means of supposedly discouraging the use of such products, while providing the government with a lucrative means of taxing the public in addition to many other forms of property, income, and sales taxes that regularly assault the public's pocketbooks. Now, [Kelly Cassidy](#) (D-Chicago), a member of the Illinois legislature, is proposing a similar "sin tax" on ammunition. At the same time, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel is pushing for a new statewide "handgun registry" that would not only impose an onerous burden on gun owners (\$65 per firearm), but would also create a massive state database tracking the location and ownership of every firearm in the state.



Cassidy's bill to increase the taxes on ammunition is supposedly intended to fund a "high-crime trauma center grant fund" by means of a two-percent surtax on ammunition. The grant fund would then be used to give financial assistance to trauma centers in "high-crime areas." An [article by Judson Berger for FoxNews](#) explains the logic behind the new tax:

The idea is to begin to offset the high cost of gun violence. Mark Walsh, campaign director for the Illinois Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, told FoxNews.com that cost often ends up being shouldered by these urban trauma centers.

"[The money would go] into communities here in Illinois that have been damaged with gun violence," he said. "I think it's a legitimate way to pursue funding."

Cassidy filed the bill ([HB 5167](#)) on February 8; nine days later it was assigned to the executive committee. According to the text of the legislation, the new tax would come into effect at the beginning of next year:

Beginning January 1, 2013, in addition to all other rates of tax imposed under this Act, a surcharge of 2% is imposed on the selling price of firearm ammunition, except firearm ammunition purchased by the Department of Natural Resources. "Firearm" and "firearm ammunition" have the meanings ascribed to them in Section 1.1 of the Firearm Owners



Identification Card Act.

The legislation also specifies that all the funds raised through the new surcharge would be distributed monthly to designated "trauma centers":

Beginning January 1, 2013, the Department shall pay into the High Crime Trauma Center Grant Fund 100% of the net revenue realized for the preceding month from the 2% surcharge on the selling price of firearm ammunition.

Critics of the legislation, including Richard Pearson of the Illinois State Rifle Association, view the new ammunition surcharge as one that taxes gun owners — especially those in rural areas — to pay the costs for Chicago's high crime rate. As Pearson told FoxNews:

"We aren't causing the problem. They are," Pearson said. "It's an attack on firearm owners and their rights.... They think that because we like to target shoot and hunt, we're bad people, and we should pay for all the ills of the city of Chicago."

The Fox story continued,

Since gun owners in Illinois have to have a special ID card which requires a background check to obtain, Pearson said those committing crimes of gun violence aren't likely to be paying much into the proposed tax fund.

"They're not buying their ammunition [legally]. They're not paying any part of the tax. They're getting their stuff illegally," he said.

Facing the prospect of ammunition costing approximately 50 cents more per box, even a monthly trip to the gun range could become significantly more expensive.

[An article for Chicago radio station WBEZ details the proposed legislation:](#)

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel wants lawmakers to require that all handguns in Illinois be registered with the state, or gun owners could face felony charges....

Under Emanuel's proposal, handgun owners would have to pay \$65 for a registration certificate from the state, which would function much like the title to a car....

The handgun registration certificate would include information about the owner, the make and model of the gun, as well as where and when the firearm was bought. Registration applicants would also need a valid firearm owners identification card.

Owners and dealers would be required to notify Illinois State Police whenever a handgun changes hands. The registration certificate would last for five years, and cost \$25 to renew.

Handgun owners would also have to tell the state if their gun gets lost or stolen, or they could face misdemeanor charges, according to the mayor's proposal. People caught in possession of an unregistered gun would be slapped with a felony.

The hefty registration fee imposes an onerous burden on gun owners — one which, for relatively inexpensive firearms, adds an additional tax at a rate of 20 percent, or more. Even worse, the legislation criminalizes ownership of an item that is closely linked to the free exercise of a fundamental liberty protected by the U.S. Constitution. Would Emanuel expect printing presses, photocopiers, and laser printers to be registered with the government, lest someone exercise their First Amendment liberties in an unregistered way?



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As John Haughey recently opined in [an article for OutdoorLife.com](#):

Hypocrisy is so entrenched in what passes for political discourse in Illinois that a Chicago mayor can [thumb] his nose at the U.S. Constitution and the U.S. Supreme Court, and demand that law-abiding citizens pay a fee to exercise a civil liberty ... and it elicits little commentary other than shrugs and smirks.

On Feb. 9, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel began lobbying state Legislators to establish a statewide "handgun registry" that would require all Illinois handgun owners to pay a \$65 registration fee to the state and provide the Illinois State Police with personal information, the gun's make and model, and where and when the firearm was purchased.

This isn't audacity, it is a crass ploy based on the reality that gun owners are an exploitable constituency with little political efficacy. In Illinois, especially when Chicago politicians dominate Springfield (and, by the way, Washington D.C.), an exploitable constituency is another way to say, "Easy target."

Emanuel and his allies are "targeting" the constitutional liberties of the people of Illinois. Criminalizing gun ownership is no joke; it is a frontal assault on the civil liberties of the people of these United States.



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