



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 6, 2016

## Maine Sheriffs Oppose Universal Background Check Ballot Initiative

On the ballot in November in Maine will appear Question 3, requiring for the first time that a gun buyer and seller meet at a licensed gun dealer and go through a background check before transferring a firearm. If approved by Mainers, the requirement also will apply to those just lending a firearm to a friend.



On Tuesday, 12 of Maine's 16 county sheriffs [announced their formal opposition](#) to the ballot initiative:

We ... do not support the Question 3 ballot initiative. This measure will do nothing to stop evil people from getting their hands on guns. In fact, all relevant data indicates that criminals acquire firearms through theft and the black market. This initiative will not stop [this] recurring pattern....

No provisions in this legislation would reduce gun violence or crime in Maine. In fact, Question 3 is unenforceable, confusing, poorly written and threatens to make law-abiding gun owners into criminals for simply loaning a firearm to a friend.

By and large, the people who commit crimes with firearms are not concerned with good citizenship, compliance with existing law and are repeat offenders. It's the law-abiding citizens [who] are most affected by arbitrary gun laws and will be most affected by Question 3.

One of the sheriffs opposing the measure is Hancock County Sheriff Scott Kane, who said on his Facebook page, "While we respect the position and opinions of others ... after careful deliberations and discussions with proponents and opponents alike, I will be joining 11 other Sheriffs from around the State of Maine in voting No on #3."

Perhaps no one is more eloquent in his opposition to the proposed measure than is Maine Governor Paul LePage. On October 5 he called it as he saw it: "unenforceable ... unfunded ... and ... the first step toward gun registration." In his Weekly Message he added:

The name of this proposal is misleading. Universal Background Checks are not "universal" because criminals will never follow this law. Criminals get guns by breaking existing laws. They steal them, buy them on the black market or use straw purchasers. Less than one percent of criminals get firearms from dealers at gun shows.

This proposal won't do anything to stop criminals from getting guns. It should be called the Gun Registry Bill. That's because so-called Universal Background Checks cannot be enforced without requiring complete gun registration.

Maine's governor went even further, calling out the primary funder behind Question 3:

This Gun Registry Bill is being financed by liberal billionaire Michael Bloomberg. He wants the government to know if you own firearms. Bloomberg's proposal would criminalize law-abiding



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firearms owners who loan or transfer guns to each other....

So don't be fooled. Bloomberg's proposal is not enforceable. It's not going to prevent criminals from having guns. And it's not really about lawful transfers of firearms. It's all about creating a gun registration so Michael Bloomberg and the government will know if you own a gun.

For good measure LePage challenged Bloomberg with this:

When Bloomberg solves the problem of gun violence in Chicago and his hometown of New York City, then he can come lecture us about firearms. Until then, he should stay out of Maine and keep his hands off our guns.

At present Maine's gun laws are among the freest in the nation: No permit to purchase a gun is required, open carry is permitted (and concealed carry permits are issued on a "shall issue" basis for those wishing to travel to other states with reciprocal agreements), the state preempts local municipalities from enacting their own more stringent gun laws, and there are no restrictions on so-called assault weapons or magazine capacities.

It's called freedom to engage in precious rights guaranteed not only under the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution but Maine's constitution as well: Article I, Section 16: "Every citizen has a right to keep and bear arms and this right shall never be questioned."

Not surprisingly, Maine is ranked No. 2 among the safest states in the country with a violent crime rate of just 127.8 per 100,000 population (the national average is 366) and No. 5 for its murder rate in 2014 of just 21 out of a population of more than 1.3 million.

Also not surprising, perhaps, is LePage's own record as a fiscal conservative, earning an "A" from Cato's 2016 "Report Card on America's Governors" released last week. LePage is one of just five governors earning that coveted "A" from Cato, for good reason. According to the conservative think tank:

Governor Paul LePage has been a staunch fiscal conservative. He has held down general fund spending in recent years, and he has cut state government employment [by] 9 percent since he took office [in January 2011]. LePage has signed into law cost-cutting reforms to welfare and health programs, and he has decried the negative effects of big government: "Big, expensive welfare programs, riddled with fraud and abuse, threaten our future. Too many Mainers are dependent on government. Government dependency has not - and never will - create prosperity."

Also appearing on Maine's November ballot are Question 1: legalization of marijuana, and Question 2: imposing higher income taxes on households earning more than \$200,000 a year. Predictably, Governor LePage opposes both of them as well.

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