



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on March 1, 2013

Maryland Senate Passes Governor O'Malley's Gun Control Bill

After 10 hours of intense debate, the Maryland Senate [passed Governor Martin O'Malley's gun control measure](#) handily late Thursday afternoon, 28-19, with all 12 Republicans and a handful of Democrats voting against the bill. The measure will be debated in the House next week, with passage nearly certain. After O'Malley signs the bill into law it will make Maryland's gun laws among the most restrictive in the nation, putting the lie to the state's moniker, "[The Free State](#)."



Maryland is also the nation's wealthiest state, and its citizens currently have registered [more than 1,200,000 of their firearms with the state](#) under previous law. The new legislation will require gun owners, as well as new purchasers of firearms, to get fingerprinted, take eight hours of classroom study, and pay for a more extensive background check. In addition, no one will be able to buy a so-called "assault weapon" or purchase a magazine that holds more than 10 rounds. The bill will also tighten up limits on gun ownership by residents committed against their will for mental health treatment.

When O'Malley announced his proposal [in January](#), he said that the requirements in it were "common-sense gun safety measures ... [that] will give us the tools to combat... violence" but would also protect Marylanders' Second Amendment rights. They were also touted as somehow being able to rein in criminal ownership of guns and reducing the firepower of those remaining in the hands of the public. At O'Malley's public announcement, Baltimore County Police Chief Jim Johnson, a member of Vice President Joe Biden's "National Law Enforcement Partnership," said that that group "has been calling for background checks for all firearms purchasers, as well as a ban on semiautomatic assault weapons and ammunition magazines in excess of ten rounds... We must do all we can to ensure that we keep guns out of the wrong hands and that we keep excessive firepower out of our communities."

When the senate passed the bill, O'Malley declared: "It is a common-sense licensing requirement. If you have to get a license to drive a car in Maryland ... you should have to be licensed in order to operate a firearm."

Maryland senate's President Pro Tem [Nathaniel McFadden](#), a member of the state senate for nearly 20 years, [was delighted with the bill's passage](#):

Residents are sick and tired of this gun violence. No, this is not a perfect bill. Because you're right — those criminals are not going to go and get fingerprinted.

But somehow these guns find their way into our communities.... They come from somewhere, and you can get a gun quicker than you [can] get an apple or an orange in my community. It's outrageous, and we have to start somewhere.

What's really happening in Maryland has little to do with controlling crime but possibly everything to do



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with O'Malley. [The Baltimore Sun exulted](#) that the bill passed by the senate contained the licensing provision which is "the centerpiece" of the governor's bill and the one they believe would be most effective in reducing gun violence. Instead, it looks as if passage will be most effective in promoting O'Malley's run for the presidency in 2016.

The governor got involved in left-wing causes while still in college, working with [Gary Hart's presidential campaign for president in 1984](#). From there he worked as state field director of then-congresswoman Barbara Mikulski (now Maryland's senior senator), and then took a position in her office as a "legislative fellow." In 2004, O'Malley spoke at the 2004 Democratic National Convention in support of John Kerry's campaign for president against President George W. Bush. In August 2005, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg's *Business Week* magazine touted O'Malley as one of the "new stars" in the Democrat Party galaxy, along with then-Senator Ken Salazar, then-Senator Barack Obama, and then-Representative Rahm Emanuel. The only one not eventually involved intimately in the Obama administration was Martin O'Malley.

O'Malley is term-limited in 2014, which gives him a full two years to explore a presidential run in 2016. Passage of this signature piece of legislation, supported by nothing more than rhetoric, will add to his perceived credibility among those on the Left. O'Malley has often referred to his success in reducing crime while he was mayor of Baltimore from 1999 to 2007, claiming that under his administration crime dropped by nearly 40 percent. The fact that he could never prove where that statistic came from, [nor could anyone else](#), doesn't matter.

Neither does it matter that limiting magazines to 10 rounds will hardly have an impact on reducing crime. [Indiana sheriffs have completely debunked](#) the idea that limiting magazines will give victims time to tackle a shooter and take him down by forcing the shooter to reload more often. According to their real-world test, "There is little to no difference in the time it takes to fire 30 rounds from 2 15-round magazines, 3 10-round magazines or 5 6-round magazines."

Nor does it matter to O'Malley that passage of his bill will likely [drive employers such as Beretta USA out of the state](#), taking with them some 300-400 jobs. As Jeffrey Reh, general counsel for Beretta who testified against O'Malley's bill, put it: "Why expand in a place where people who built the gun [banned by the new law] couldn't buy it?"

Why, indeed? O'Malley's bill might just have more to do with O'Malley's political future, and building creds with the Democratic Party insiders, than it has to do with trying to reduce crime in Maryland.

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