

News

Some Washington Sheriffs Refuse to Enforce New Gun Laws

Statewide initiative approved last fall raised the minimum age for semi-automatic rifles, required safety course and expanded background check and storage requirements

By *Nicholas K. Geranios*
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Sheriffs in a dozen Washington counties say they won't enforce the state's sweeping new restrictions on semi-automatic rifles until the courts decide whether they are constitutional.

A statewide initiative approved by voters in November raised the minimum age for buying semi-automatic rifles from 18 to 21, required buyers to first pass a firearms safety course and added expanded background checks and gun storage requirements, among other things. It was among the most comprehensive of a string of state-level gun-control measures enacted in the U.S. after last year's shooting at a Florida

high school.

The National Rifle Association and the Second Amendment Foundation have filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging the initiative is unconstitutional. They say its purchasing requirements violate the right to bear arms and stray into the regulation of interstate commerce, which is the province of the federal government.

“I swore an oath to defend our citizens and their constitutionally protected rights. I do not believe the popular vote overrules that

Sheriffs in 12 mostly rural, conservative counties — Grant, Lincoln, Okanogan, Cowlitz, Douglas, Benton, Pacific, Stevens, Yakima,

Wahkiakum, Mason and Klickitat — along with the police chief of the small town of Republic, have said they will not enforce the new law until the issues are decided by the courts.

“I swore an oath to defend our citizens and their constitutionally protected rights,” Grant County Sheriff Tom Jones said. “I do not believe the popular vote

overrules that.”

Initiative supporters say they are disappointed but noted the sheriffs have no role in enforcing the new restrictions



In this photo taken Oct. 2, 2018, semi-automatic rifles fill a wall at a gun shop in Lynnwood, Wash. A dozen county sheriffs in Washington state are refusing to enforce restrictions on semi-automatic rifles that voters approved in November. They say the new law might be unconstitutional, and they're waiting for the courts to weigh in.

until July 1, when the expanded background checks take effect. The provision brings vetting for semi-automatic rifle

and other gun purchases in line with the process for buying pistols.

“The political grandstanding is disheartening,” said Renee Hopkins, chief executive of the Alliance for Gun Responsibility, which pushed the initiative. “If they do not (run the background checks), we will have a huge problem.”

Initiative 1639 was passed by about 60 percent of Washington voters nine months after a gunman opened fire at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

The Parkland shooting, which left 17 dead, fueled a shift in the country's political landscape regarding gun control. Other state-level measures included requiring waiting periods and banning high-capacity magazines. Nine states have approved laws that allow the temporary confiscation of weapons from people deemed a safety risk, bringing the total to 14 nationwide. Several more are likely to follow in the coming months.

At the federal level, for the first time in modern history, gun-control groups outspent the NRA on the 2018 midterm

elections. President Donald Trump directed the Justice Department to issue regulations to ban so-called bump stocks. And the new Democratic majority in the House last week held its first hearing on gun control in a decade.

“For far too long, Republicans in Congress have offered moments of silence instead of action in the wake of gun tragedies. That era is over,” Democratic Rep. Jerrold Nadler of New York said as he convened the House Judiciary Committee hearing on Wednesday.

Washington's initiative targeted semi-automatic assault rifles like the AR-15 used in the Florida shooting and other recent high-profile attacks. Such rifles fire only once for each pull of the trigger but automatically eject and rechamber a new round after each shot.

Grant County's sheriff said many residents in his part of the state, known for its vast potato farms, are strong supporters of gun rights. They “have a right to have this challenge and

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CLACKAMAS COUNTY

MULINO CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT COALITION
13700 S Freeman Rd, Mulino
Feb 19..... 9:15-11:15 a.m.

SALVATION ARMY NORTH CLACKAMAS
8495 SE Monterey
Happy Valley
Feb 15... 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

MULTNOMAH COUNTY

CAREOREGON
315 SW 5th Ave, Portland
Feb 6 9-11 a.m.
Feb 13 9-11 a.m.
Feb 20 9-11 a.m.
Feb 27 9-11 a.m.

CLACKAMAS SERVICE CENTER
8800 SE 80th Ave, Portland
Feb 12 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
50 SW 2nd Ave, Portland
Feb 5 9-11 a.m.
Feb 12 9-11 a.m.
Feb 19 9-11 a.m.
Feb 26 9-11 a.m.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES ALBERTA
30 N Webster St Ste A, Portland
Feb 5 1-3 p.m.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES SE
8129 SE Malden St, Portland
Feb 12 1-3 p.m.

JOIN
1435 NE 81st Ave Ste 100
Portland
Feb 14 12-2 p.m.

PORTLAND RESCUE MISSION
111 W Burnside, Portland
Feb 14 8-10 a.m.
Feb 28 8-10 a.m.

SALVATION ARMY SOCIAL SERVICES FAIR
5325 N Williams Ave
Portland
Feb 8...11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

UNION GOSPEL MISSION
3 NW 3rd, Portland
Feb 26 2-4 p.m.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

BEAVERTON LIBRARY
12375 SW 5th St, Beaverton
Feb 13 1-3 p.m.

CHINESE NEW YEAR CULTURAL FAIR
Convention Center
Feb 2.....10 a.m.-5 p.m.

VIETNAMESE NEW YEAR
Holiday Inn
Portland Airport
Feb 2.....9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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