



Illinois State Rifle Association

Since 1903 - Illinois' Leading Advocate of Safe, Lawful, and Responsible Firearms Ownership

ISRA Alert: *State Police Proposal Would Abolish Youth Hunting/Shooting/Gun Safety Programs*

A proposal submitted by the Illinois State Police (ISP) to the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) would effectively eliminate participation in shooting activities by anyone under 10 years of age. The proposal, which would establish minimum age requirements for obtaining an Illinois Firearm Owner's Identification Card (FOID), comes in the wake of an irresponsibly biased feature article that had appeared in a south suburban newspaper. In the article, the feature writer spun a near-satirical yarn about how easily his newborn son, 'Bubba' was able to obtain a FOID. Reaction to the article amongst anti-gun/anti-hunting forces was predictably hysterical. In response, Gov. Blagojevich's State Police issued a proposed change in the law which would set 10 years of age as the minimum age at which one could obtain a FOID.

To become effective, the ISP's age-limit proposal must be approved by JCAR - an administrative body responsible for establishing regulations and implementing guidance for statutes signed into law by the governor. Prior to considering proposed regulations, JCAR must observe a 45-day public comment period during which citizens may submit their views on the proposal, in writing, to JCAR.

Of course, the ISRA is adamantly opposed to the ISP's FOID age-limit proposal. More specifically, the ISRA seeks rejection of the proposal for the following reasons:

1. There is no practical purpose for establishing a minimum age-limit for FOID cards. The ISP, and others, claim that setting a minimum age for acquiring a FOID would reduce violent crime and firearm accidents. Yet, the fact of the matter is, nobody under the age of 18, FOID or no FOID, can purchase a firearm in Illinois. Furthermore, nobody under the age of 21 may purchase a handgun in Illinois. On the matter of firearm safety, childhood deaths from accidental firearm discharge are at historical lows - a phenomenon resulting in large part to youth firearm training classes put on by the NRA and sportsmen's clubs. The ISP proposal could actually increase the likelihood of accidental childhood firearm deaths by prohibiting meaning firearm training of children during life stages where it will do the most good.
2. The proposal materially alters the spirit and legislative intent of the state's safe firearms storage laws. By prohibiting FOID issuance to children under 10, millions of low-risk households would be forced to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to bring their homes into compliance with safe storage laws. At the same time, high-risk households would be unaffected due to ignorance of safe firearm handling procedures and contempt for laws already in force.
3. The proposal denies parents the right to choose when and how their children become involved in hunting and the shooting sports.
4. The proposal would severely damage the state's hunting heritage by delaying the entry of successive generations into the sport.

ISRA members are encouraged strongly to submit comments on the proposal to the address below.

NOTE: It is very important that you remain polite and respectful when submitting your comments to JCAR about the proposed regulations. Speak strictly to the facts presented above. JCAR is only interested in the matter at hand - whether the minimum age for obtaining a FOID should be set at 10 years of age. Getting off message will not help our cause.

Please send comments on your opposition to this change by October 25, 2007, in writing, to:

Mr. John M. Hosteny
Interim Chief Legal Counsel
Illinois State Police
801 South 7th Street, Suite 1000-S
Post Office Box 19461
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Post this information to any and all Internet bulletin boards or blogs to which you belong.