

Talking Points: SF2959
Latz/Becker-Finn Assault Weapon
21-Year-Old Age Requirement Bill



If 20-year-olds are too young to drink a beer, they are too young to possess weapons designed for war.

It is common practice to set legal ages for activities that require maturity such as voting, driving, and drinking alcohol. Purchasing and possessing a military-style assault weapon should certainly necessitate the same, or greater, ability to act responsibly. Young adults account for a disproportionate number of gun homicides, and semiautomatic military-style assault weapons have become the preferred firearm of mass shooters. By strengthening our minimum age requirement for purchasing and possessing these dangerous weapons, we will help protect the public from all too common tragedies--without preventing young adults from hunting or sport shooting.

SUMMARY OF THE BILL

- 1) The bill raises the minimum age requirement to purchase or possess a semiautomatic military-style assault weapon in Minnesota to 21 years old. Exceptions are provided if the person is a member of the armed forces, a peace officer, has been honorably discharged from the armed forces, or is under the direct supervision of a parent or guardian.
- 2) The bill defines and expands what is meant by "semiautomatic military-style assault weapon" by listing specific makes and models of semiautomatic, military-style assault weapons, and including any weapons similar to those specific makes and models, as well as conversion kits that can be used to assemble a semiautomatic military-style assault weapon.
- 3) The bill excludes any weapon from the new age minimum that is "generally recognized as particularly suitable for or readily adaptable to sporting purposes" and provides a list of features that classify a firearm as a semiautomatic military-style assault weapon.
- 4) The bill criminalizes the transfer of semiautomatic military-style assault weapons to underage persons.

WHY IS THIS BILL NECESSARY?

Recognizing that some forms of firearms present a greater threat to public safety than others, federal law prohibits those under 21 from purchasing a pistol from a federally licensed dealer. However, current Minnesota law allows those 18 and older to possess semiautomatic military-style assault weapons, which have much greater lethality. This bill prohibits those under age 21 from purchasing or possessing semiautomatic military-style assault weapons, without interfering with the right of 18-20 year olds to hunt and participate in sport shooting activities.

NEUROBEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT AND VIOLENT CRIME

Young adults with highly-lethal firearms are a dangerous combination.

Eighteen- to 20-year-olds commit gun homicides at a rate nearly four times higher than adults age 21 and older.⁽¹⁾ Most homicides are committed in the 19-21 age range.⁽²⁾ In general, the prevalence of criminal and violent behavior tends to increase from late childhood, peak during ages 18-20, and then decline markedly after age 21.⁽³⁾

Impulse control is still developing after age 18.

Research attributes the high rate of violent crime by young adults to the fact that the human brain is not fully mature at 18, particularly in regard to executive functioning and impulse control. The frontal cortex, the area of the brain that controls reasoning and helps us think before we act, develops later. This part of the brain is still changing and maturing well beyond age 18.⁽⁴⁾ In light of these findings, it makes sense that those under age 21 would be prohibited from possessing semiautomatic military-style assault weapons.

LETHALITY OF THESE WEAPONS

Because they were specifically designed as weapons of war, semiautomatic military-style assault weapons have far greater potential for lethality than firearms designed for hunting and sport shooting.

These weapons are designed to be lightweight, accommodate high capacity magazines that can hold up to 100 rounds, and shoot at great speed and with great power and accuracy. Because of these attributes, semiautomatic military-style assault weapons have become the “go to” firearm for mass shootings, having been used at Parkland, Sutherland Springs, Las Vegas, Orlando, San Bernardino, and Newtown.

These weapons can injure and kill more victims than other firearms.

Semiautomatic military-style assault weapons differ from military versions in that they cannot be set to fire automatically. Nonetheless, these weapons are designed to fire off bullets very quickly. Some manufacturers boast that an experienced shooter could fire as many as 45 rounds in one minute.

In addition, high capacity magazines make it easy for gunmen to kill and injure many victims before having to stop to reload, and magazines containing fresh ammunition can be swapped out in a matter of seconds.⁽⁵⁾ In fact, *135% more victims were shot and 57% more victims were killed in mass shootings when assault-style weapons or large-capacity ammunition magazines were used, compared to other mass shootings.*⁽⁶⁾

These weapons are far more powerful than other firearms.

The AR-15, for instance, shoots at about three times the muzzle velocity of the average Glock pistol. The AR-15's effective firing range is also more than 1,300 feet, whereas a typical Glock's firing range is just over 160 feet. Many tests put the muzzle velocity of a standard round from an AR-15 at 3,200 feet per second, making it accurate up to 500 yards—more than a quarter-mile. Rounds from these weapons travel so fast that they can penetrate a victim, then a wall, then a bystander in the next room.⁽⁷⁾ *In Sutherland Springs, the shooter killed many of his victims by shooting through the walls of the church from the outside.*

These weapons can also puncture body armor used by police.

One of every four law enforcement officers slain in the line of duty in 2016 were killed with a semiautomatic military-style assault weapon. *In one-quarter of these deaths, a bullet penetrated the officer's body armor.*⁽⁸⁾

These weapons do far greater damage to the human body than other guns.

Like actual military assault weapons, semiautomatic military-style assault weapons available for civilian purchase shoot lightweight, high-speed bullets that can cause grievous bone and soft tissue wounds, in part by turning sideways, or “yawing,” when they hit a person.⁽⁹⁾ Civilian owners of military-style weapons can also buy soft-nosed or hollow-point ammunition that lacks a full metal jacket and can expand and fragment on impact. Such bullets, which cause wider, even more devastating wound channels, are prohibited in most military use by the Geneva Convention because they cause too much damage to the human body.⁽¹⁰⁾

Surgeons say these weapons produce the same sort of horrific injuries seen on battlefields.⁽¹¹⁾ Said one who has worked on victims of shootings similar to the recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida: “The tissue destruction is almost unimaginable. Bones are exploded, soft tissue is absolutely destroyed. The injuries to the chest or abdomen — it's like a bomb went off.”⁽¹²⁾ *Because of their great destructiveness, the Minnesota Medical Association recently called for assault weapons and high capacity magazines to be banned.*⁽¹³⁾

WHAT EXACTLY IS A SEMIAUTOMATIC MILITARY-STYLE ASSAULT WEAPON?

The features that distinguish an automatic military assault weapon, such as the M16, from a semi-automatic hunting rifle include:

- large detachable magazines holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition that can be changed quickly;
- telescoping or folding stocks that make the weapon more compact and easier to carry in public without drawing attention;
- pistol grips, which give greater accuracy and free up the shooter's support-side hand to open door ways and manipulate objects;
- thumbhole stocks, that allow the shooter to control the weapon during rapid firing;
- flash suppressors, to reduce the visibility of the shots in the dark so as not to give away the shooter's position;
- barrel shrouds, which prevent the burning of shooter's arm or hand while using the non-trigger hand to steady the weapon for greater accuracy when firing rapidly.



GUN LOBBY ARGUMENTS AGAINST PASSAGE

Claim: There is no difference between a semiautomatic hunting rifle and a semiautomatic military-style assault weapon. People are just afraid of the way “scary black guns” look.

Truth: If that were the case, the military would issue hunting rifles to its troops, and these weapons would never have been developed. Moreover, there would not be so many more casualties in mass shootings when semiautomatic military-style assault weapons are used.

Claim: This bill would prevent people under the age of 21 from hunting, a great Minnesota sporting heritage.

*Truth: The bill specifically **excludes** any weapon that is generally recognized as suitable for hunting or sport purposes. Despite the NRA's claims, semiautomatic military-style assault weapons are NOT designed or even useful for hunting. That's why 67% of Americans now support a full, nationwide ban of these weapons. ⁽¹⁴⁾*

NOTES

(1) FBI Supplementary Homicide Report, 2010-2014, and US Census Population Data, 2010-2014. Persons aged 18-20 made up 4.24% of of the US population and were the primary offender in 17.16% of all gun homicides for which the age of the offender was known. Adults aged 21 and over made up 72.25% of the population and were the primary offender in 76.24% of all gun homicides for which the age of the offender was known.

(2) Farrington, David P., "Age and Crime," in *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research*, vol. 7, eds. Michael Tonry and Norval Morris, Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1986: 189-250; Piquero, Alex R., David P. Farrington, and Alfred Blumstein, *Key Issues in Criminal Career Research: New Analyses of the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development*, Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

(3) IBID

(4) "Teen Brain: Behavior, Problem Solving, and Decision Making", *American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, No. 95; September 2016.

(5) https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/mass-shootings-weapons-ar-15_us_575ec6b7e4b00f97fba8de0e

(6) For some of the mass shootings included in the analysis, information about the types of firearms and ammunition magazines used remains unknown. *Mayors Against Illegal Guns, Analysis of Recent Mass Shootings 1* (Jan. 2013), at <http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/56/4/1242/analysis-of-recent-mass-shootings.pdf>

(7) <http://www.businessinsider.com/ar-15-semi-automatic-history-why-used-mass-shootings-2018-2#in-1963-colt-began-marketing-the-ar-15-to-the-american-public-as-a-superb-hunting-partner-2>

(8) <http://www.vpc.org/press/new-data-shows-one-in-four-law-enforcement-officers-slain-in-the-line-of-duty-in-2016-felled-by-an-assault-weapon/>

(9) <http://www.businessinsider.com/ar-15-semi-automatic-history-why-used-mass-shootings-2018-2#in-1963-colt-began-marketing-the-ar-15-to-the-american-public-as-a-superb-hunting-partner-2>

(10) <http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-911286>

(11) IBID

(12) <http://www.cetusnews.com/life/Wounds-From-Military-Style-Rifles--%E2%80%98A-Ghastly-Thing-to-See%E2%80%99.r1fFRrYOM.html>

(13) Minnesota Medical Association Statement on Gun Violence, March 2018.

(14) Quinnipiac Poll, February 2018. <https://poll.qu.edu/national/release-detail?ReleaseID=2521>