

STATE OF CONNECTICUT



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

John A. Danaher III
Commissioner

Lieutenant Edwin S. Henion
Chief of Staff

March 17, 2008

Rep. Michael P. Lawlor, Co-Chairman
Sen. Andrew J. McDonald, Co-Chairman
Judiciary Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

SB 603 AN ACT CONCERNING AMMUNITION CODING

The Department of Public Safety advises of fiscal impact and opposes this bill.

The Department of Public Safety opposes this bill based on significant fiscal impact to agency and other notable concerns. This bill specifically targets both "handgun or assault weapon" ammunition which is manufactured or sold at retail within Connecticut to be coded with a unique identifier etched onto the base of the bullet projectile by the manufacturer. Due to the large variety and types of ammunition made, ammunition that functions in assault weapons will also function in other types of firearms that are legal for possession and use in the state. There is no ammunition that is manufactured specifically and solely for use in "assault weapons," and which cannot be used in other, legal applications. Some ammunition made is interchangeable between certain types of handguns and long guns, and cannot be distinguished for use in one application or the other. Therefore, serious recognition and implementation concerns exist.

Phone: (860) 685-8000 Fax: (860) 685-8354
1111 Country Club Road
Middletown, CT 06457-2389
An Equal Opportunity Employer

Current assault weapon legislation often fails to clearly define whether certain makes, types or modifications of firearms constitute such firearms as assault weapons in Connecticut. Depending on the make and model, firing capability, type or configuration of the weapon, or combination of parts that could be used to create an assault weapon, any number of semi-automatic pistols, rifles or shotguns can possibly be considered an assault weapon, subject to seizure or surrender, and the owner or person in possession subject to potential arrest. Manufacturers, firearms experts, law enforcement and court officials are often at odds and of differing opinion as to the legality of certain weapons. Assault weapons are designed to use the same makes, types and caliber ammunition that is manufactured for and used in legal firearms and for a host of legal purposes.

Many types of ammunition are specifically designed and manufactured to fragment upon impact, making such etched coding useless. Depending on the target, ammunition is often fragmented or destroyed beyond recovery or recognition upon impact with hard surfaces.

Many citizens reload their own ammunition for personal use. Ammunition can also be purchased out-of-state and transported into Connecticut. Such ammunition would not be traceable under this bill. Ammunition and firearms used in criminal activities are often stolen, which further inhibits identification and enforcement efforts.

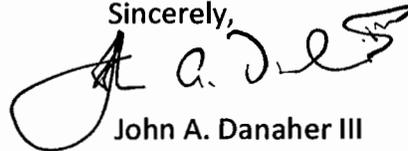
There would be significant fiscal impact to DPS, as this bill requires DPS to establish and maintain an ammunition coding system database. The database would be huge, involving the need for hiring additional personnel, purchasing computer, software and programming equipment, office equipment, and possibly facility expansion. Each box of bullets would likely have the same code number on each bullet, with bar coding on the outside of the box being scanned into the dealer's computer. This information, along with purchasers' personal information at the time of sale (or shortly thereafter), would somehow be passed onto DPS. Ammunition manufacturers sell hundreds of millions of rounds of ammunition each year. Implementation costs for manufacturers, dealers and DPS would be enormous.

Section 3 of this bill requires that records of coded ammunition involved in sales, deliveries and other transfers to, from or within the state be maintained on the business premise for seven years. It also requires businesses to maintain records of coded ammunition sales for three years from the date of such sale. Why the differences? What happens after those time periods pass? Ammunition normally does not go bad, unless wet, and can be used well beyond the three and seven year periods. As an investigatory tool, these time limits would significantly restrict the ability of law enforcement to solve gun violence crimes.

Additionally, the only link between the ammunition used and the shooter would be to possibly identify the original purchaser of the ammunition. Section 3 also requires the purchaser to be identified through a motor vehicle operator's license or other government-issued identification card number. Many cities have begun issuing identification cards to illegal aliens, with minimal or highly inadequate proof of identity.

Penalties related to this bill place only civil penalties on violations by manufacturers, while providing for criminal penalties against retailers or others who violate provisions within the bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. A. Danaher III". The signature is stylized with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke.

John A. Danaher III
COMMISSIONER

Department of Public Safety