
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5177

AN ACT CONCERNING ISSUANCE OF TEMPORARY STATE FIREARM PERMITS BY TRIBAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS.

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes the Mohegan and Mashantucket Pequot police chiefs to issue temporary state handgun permits to applicants who are tribal reservation residents. Under current law, tribal reservation residents must apply for these permits to the local official (police chief, borough warden, or first selectman) of the municipality in which the reservation is located.

Specifically, the bill allows the police chiefs of federally recognized Native American tribes in the state with a “law enforcement unit” to issue the permits to applicants who are bona fide permanent residents of the tribal reservations, pursuant to the statutory permit approval process. By law, “law enforcement units” include the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan tribal police departments which are governed under a memorandum of agreement (CGS § 7-294a).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2022

BACKGROUND

Handgun Permit Application Process

With certain exceptions, state law bars anyone from carrying a handgun (i.e., a pistol or revolver) in Connecticut without a permit. In a two-step process, state residents must first get a temporary state permit from the local permit-issuing official (in most cases, the police chief) as a condition of getting a five-year permit from the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP). The local official must investigate the applicant and find that he or she is suitable to carry firearms and wants to carry them for lawful purposes (CGS §§ 29-28 to -29).

Attorney General Opinion

In a 2017 opinion (Attorney General Opinion 2017-05), the attorney general concluded that residents of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation reservation are also bona fide permanent residents of Ledyard for purpose of the handgun permit law. Accordingly, he concluded that the law empowers the Ledyard police chief and DESPP commissioner to issue permits to these residents.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Public Safety and Security Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 24 Nay 0 (03/03/2022)