

Maine Legislature

Joint Committee on the Judiciary

April 16, 2025

Testimony of Peter L. Murray

LD 208 and 1230

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and Members of the Committee on the Judiciary:

My name is Peter Murray, and I live in Portland. I have been a practicing member of the Maine Bar since 1967.

My strong request and recommendation is that the Committee report LDs 208 and 1230 "Ought Not to Pass." It was less than two years ago that the previous Legislature enacted the so called 72-hour waiting period for purchasers of handguns in Maine. At this point we have no real experience with this measure. We should at least give it a few years to see if its positive benefits outweigh the concerns of the persons who are pushing these repealers.

Frankly, looked at objectively, it makes sense to make insure that purchases of handguns do not take place in haste. We should not make it too easy for people who are impelled by depression or anger to acquire deadly weapons to do themselves or others harm. The leading cause of death by gunfire in Maine is suicide. If a waiting period would prevent even one suicide in a year, the inconvenience to the gun buying public would be fully justified. By the same token, domestic violence is often the result of impulsive anger. A waiting period gives a chance for the anger to abate. Once more, if even a single Maine life is saved, it should be worth it to the rest of us.

The concern that a three-day waiting period may delay a person's ability to secure a weapon to protect against domestic or other violence does not appear to be borne out by the facts. The last thing a victim of domestic violence should do is go out and buy a handgun. That only ups the stakes and increases the chances that someone will be shot in the next encounter.

Certainly a 3-day waiting period is an inconvenience for persons who buy handguns at gun shows and under informal circumstances. However other states, such as Vermont, which have 3-day waiting periods also have gun shows. Sellers and buyers can make arrangements for safe delivery of handguns selected at gun shows after the waiting period. Again, we should give the new law a chance and see whether the inconvenience in delivery of gun show purchases is so great that we want to go back to on-the-spot purchases of handguns.

The 72-hour waiting period was enacted as a common-sense gun safety measure. Let's give it a chance to work before we throw it out based on the same kinds of objections that were considered and overruled when it was enacted.

Please report these bills "Ought Not to Pass." Thank you.