



Rachel Talbot Ross  
Senator, District 28

**THE MAINE SENATE**  
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333

*Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross introducing*  
**LD 1299, "An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles"**

*Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary*  
*April 16, 2025*

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished colleagues of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of my hometown of Portland and Peaks Island. I am here today to introduce LD 1299, "An Act to Prohibit the Unsecured Storage of Handguns in Motor Vehicles."

This bill is straightforward: it calls for the secure storage of handguns left in unattended vehicles. And the reason is simple: gun thefts are the largest source of stolen firearms in the U.S. — yet Maine currently has no law addressing this issue.<sup>1</sup> LD 1299 seeks to change that and prevent firearm theft, specifically by addressing handgun storage in unoccupied vehicles.

LD 1299 prohibits a person from intentionally or knowingly storing a handgun in an unoccupied motor vehicle unless the handgun is stored out of plain view in a locked hard-sided container and the motor vehicle is locked. If the storage container is located in the trunk, the trunk must be locked as well. Violation of this requirement would incur civil penalties rather than criminal penalties. The bill also includes a number of exceptions, including for law enforcement, active-duty military, and certain hunting activities.

Storing a firearm in a locked, hard-sided container out of plain sight minimizes the likelihood that a handgun could be accessed by an unauthorized user or stolen from the vehicle.<sup>2</sup> This is especially important because stolen firearms have nine times the likelihood of being used in crimes as opposed to firearms that are legally bought and sold.<sup>3</sup> Research shows that on average, at least one gun is stolen from a car every nine minutes in the United States.<sup>4</sup> In 2022, more than half (51%) of gun thefts involved firearms stolen from vehicles, and vehicles were the single largest source of stolen firearms.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Guns are being stolen from cars at triple the rate they were 10 years ago, a report finds." AP News. 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/stolen-guns-cars-crime-fbi-data-66316ff1933dad8df984803fca377775>

<sup>2</sup> "Gun Thefts from Cars: The Largest Source of Stolen Guns" Everytown Research & Policy. 2024. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/gun-thefts-from-cars-the-largest-source-of-stolen-guns-2/>

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, S.L., McCort, C.D., Smirniotis, C. et al. "Purchaser, firearm, and retailer characteristics associated with crime gun recovery: a longitudinal analysis of firearms sold in California from 1996 to 2021." *Journal of Injury Epidemiology* (2024). <https://injejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-024-00491-8#citeas>

<sup>4</sup> Everytown Research analysis of FBI NIBRS (National Incident-Based Reporting System) data from 337 cities, 2022, and ACS population data, 2022, accessed January 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Everytown Research analysis of FBI NIBRS (National Incident-Based Reporting System) data of 159 cities, 2013–2022, and ACS population data, 2013–2022, accessed January 2024.



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And the problem is only getting worse: the rate of gun thefts from cars in this country tripled from 2013 to 2023.<sup>6</sup>

The rate of firearm thefts from cars in Maine has likely followed the same concerning trajectory, but that data is not captured by the Maine State Police or other state agencies. However, stolen firearms remain a pressing public safety issue in Maine, as stolen weapons are attractive to illegal markets, where they can be sold to people who cannot legally purchase firearms in Maine, including those with histories of violent acts, involuntary commitments, or certain felony convictions. Efforts to prevent firearm theft from cars are important because public safety data indicates that crime guns are often locally sourced.<sup>7</sup> Most firearms recovered from crimes were originally purchased within the same state, often within the same county.<sup>8</sup> Requiring handguns to be securely stored in unattended vehicles will reduce the flow of crime guns in our communities.

We also know from existing data that unsecured firearm storage in vehicles is a problem in need of a solution. Research shows that storing firearms in vehicles significantly increases the risk of those firearms being stolen.<sup>9</sup> One national survey found that 11% of gun owners store firearms unattended in their vehicles while at home, and among them, 52% did not use a locking device, allowing significant opportunity for theft of these unsecured firearms.<sup>10</sup>

Experts at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions, which utilizes objective, non-partisan research to develop public health policy solutions to save lives, advise that adopting and implementing secure storage requirements for handguns in vehicles in Maine would, in fact, strengthen public safety across the state. It would help mitigate the risks associated with unsecured firearms, particularly firearm theft from cars, which fuels illegal gun markets.<sup>11</sup> They also explain that keeping the handgun and its locked storage container out of plain sight decreases crimes of opportunity in which an individual might break into a vehicle solely to obtain a visible firearm.

For clarity, I want to note that LD 1299 does NOT require specific safe storage practices in vehicles while occupied or for other types of firearms, such as long guns. The bill also does NOT interfere with,

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<sup>6</sup> Hemenway, D., Azrael, D. & Miller, M. "Whose guns are stolen? The epidemiology of Gun theft victims." *Journal of Injury Epidemiology* (2017). <https://injejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40621-017-0109-8>

<sup>7</sup> Wintemute G.J., Romero M.P., Wright M.A., Grassel K.M.. "The life cycle of crime guns: a description based on guns recovered from young people in California." *Annals of Emergency Medicine* (2004). <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/15159705/>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. "Purchaser, firearm, and retailer characteristics associated with crime gun recovery: a longitudinal analysis of firearms sold in California from 1996 to 2021."

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. "Whose guns are stolen? The epidemiology of Gun theft victims."

<sup>10</sup> Crifasi C.K., Doucette M.L., McGinty E.E., Webster D.W., Barry C.L.. "Storage Practices of US Gun Owners in 2016." *American Journal of Public Health* (2018). <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2017.304262>

<sup>11</sup> Carey, T., Fleisher, K., McCourt, A., Hoops, K., & Crifasi, C.K.. "Safe Storage Model Policy Guide." Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2025). <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/2025-03/JHU-CGVs-Safe-Storage-Model-Policy-Guide-2025.pdf>



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amend, or curtail permitless carry as recognized by state law. LD 1299 is a commonsense bill that is narrowly tailored and centered on improving firearm safety practices rather than being criminally punitive in nature. A person who violates this prohibition commits a civil violation punishable by a fine of not less than \$200 or more than \$500. Upon a second violation, a person may face a fine of not less than \$500 or more than \$1,000.

The bill also intentionally specifies that the locking container be hard-sided, as other storage mechanisms, such as soft-sided containers, trigger locks, and cable locks, are easier for an unauthorized individual or thief to cut, disable, or otherwise undermine. Storing a handgun in a locked center console or glove compartment is insufficient for the same reasons: relative ease of theft. Best practice indicates that a locked hard-sided container is the most tamper-resistant and secure option for firearm storage when not being attended to or in use.

Maine would not be the first state to adopt safe firearm storage in vehicles legislation. Currently, five states — California, Colorado, Delaware, Hawaii, and New York — as well as Washington, DC, require firearms to be securely stored in motor vehicles. Note also that Second Amendment challenges to safe storage laws have been repeatedly rejected by the courts, indicating that these laws are compatible with Americans' Second Amendment rights.

Besides being a legally sound, commonsense solution backed by data and evidence, public polling shows overwhelming support for secure firearm storage laws. Americans from across the political spectrum support some form of safe firearm storage requirements, including nearly 70% of Republicans and 90% of Democrats.<sup>12</sup> Nearly two-thirds of gun owners (including Democrats and Republicans) support the same.<sup>13</sup>

Stolen firearms are attractive to illegal markets, where they can be sold to people who cannot legally purchase firearms, including those with histories of violent acts. This bill would help reduce the flow of crime guns, prevent gun theft from vehicles, and keep our communities safe. I urge you to vote Ought to Pass on LD 1299. Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

**Rachel Talbot Ross**  
State Senator, District 28  
*Representing part of Portland and Peaks Island*

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<sup>12</sup> "APM Survey: Americans' views on key gun policies." 2019. <https://www.apmresearchlab.org/gun-survey-storage>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. "APM Survey: Americans' views on key gun policies."

## FACTSHEET: SAFE FIREARM STORAGE IN MAINE

**The Problem:** More than half of gun owners report storing a firearm without using basic security measures like a trigger lock or gun case.<sup>1</sup> Adult and youth suicides, acts of unintentional violence, widespread firearm thefts, and other criminal activity with guns are all made possible when guns are not safely stored.

Maine has no law requiring firearm owners to securely store their guns, even if someone who is not allowed to have a gun can easily get to them. The state only penalizes those who allow young children to access firearms without parental permission, but this limited law does not mandate secure storage or prevent access by older children or others.

These unsafe storage standards have dangerous consequences. Between 70% and 90% of firearms used by minors in suicides, unintentional shootings, and school shootings are found in the child's home or the home of a relative, and often are left easily accessible.<sup>2</sup> To prevent these and other tragedies, it is crucial for firearms to be securely stored when they are not in use—especially in Maine, where nearly 90% of gun deaths are caused by suicide.<sup>3</sup>

**Unsecured Firearm Thefts in Maine:** Maine law enforcement has also noted a rise in thefts of unsecured firearms. These stolen weapons are often used to facilitate drug trafficking and other crimes. Examples from just the last few years include:

- In 2023, a man in Bowdoin with an extensive violent criminal history was able to gain access to unsecured firearms three days after being released from prison. He then killed four people, including his parents, before driving up I-295 shooting randomly at passing cars.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cassandra K. Crifasi et al., "Storage Practices of US Gun Owners in 2016," *American Journal of Public Health* 108, no. 4 (2018): 532–537; Michael D. Anestis et al., "Assessment of Firearm Storage Practices in the US, 2022," *JAMA Network Open* 6, no. 3 (2023): e231447. See also, Norah W. Friar et al., "Firearm Storage Behaviors — Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Eight States, 2021–2022," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 73, no. 23 (2024): 523–528.

<sup>2</sup> "Child Access Prevention & Safe Storage," GIFFORDS, last accessed April 2, 2025, <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/child-consumer-safety/child-access-prevention-and-safe-storage/>.

<sup>3</sup> Randy Billings, "Gun suicides in Maine far outpace U.S. rate," *Portland Press Herald*, June 8, 2022, <https://www.pressherald.com/2022/06/08/gun-suicides-in-maine-far-outpace-u-s-rate/>; Renee M. Johnson et al., "Who Are the Owners of Firearms Used in Adolescent Suicides?" *Suicide and Life-threatening Behavior* 40, no. 6 (2010): 609–611.

<sup>4</sup> "Maine man pleads guilty to Bowdoin murders, I-295 shootings," WGME, July 1, 2024, <https://wgme.com/news/local/maine-man-pleads-guilty-to-bowdoin-murders-i-295-shootings-joseph-eaton-david-and-cynthia-eaton-bobby-and-patti-eager-murder-gun-violence-bowdoin>.

- In 2023, Maine State Police performing a traffic stop in Kennebunk found a loaded, stolen handgun in a vehicle along with thousands of dollars of fentanyl and cocaine.<sup>5</sup>
- In 2024, Lewiston Police performing a raid recovered a stolen handgun alongside tens of thousands of dollars in fentanyl, cocaine, and drug proceeds.<sup>6</sup>

**The Solution:** Maine must pass a complete safe storage law that ensures firearms are not easily accessible by our youth, by criminals, or by any others who should not have them, while safeguarding parents' right to allow their children to access a firearm with permission.

This type of law will keep Mainers safe by:

- **Preventing suicide.** Safe storage laws help prevent suicide by keeping guns out of the hands of youth and reducing access for lawful adult owners in crisis.<sup>7</sup>
- **Preventing gun theft.** Securely storing guns helps keep firearms out of the hands of criminals, making it easier for law enforcement to keep communities safe.
- **Preventing unintentional gun deaths.** Safe storage prevents unintentional gun deaths by keeping firearms out of the hands of those who might handle them irresponsibly, protecting both themselves and others.

Maine should follow states like Colorado, Oregon, and Vermont by requiring firearms to be securely stored with a trigger lock, gun case, or safe when not in use. The law must also hold owners accountable if a negligently stored gun is accessed and misused by a prohibited person.

**These reforms will ensure that Maine has a comprehensive safe storage law that promotes gun owner responsibility and keeps communities safe.**

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<sup>5</sup> Reilly Musgrave, "State police traffic stop leads to seizure of guns, drugs and three arrests," WGME, March 24, 2023, <https://wgme.com/news/local/state-police-traffic-stop-leads-to-seizure-of-guns-drugs-and-three-arrests>.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Tomic, "Brothers Busted at Lewiston Apartment with Cocaine, Fentanyl, Guns," Maine Wire, October 16, 2024, <https://www.themainewire.com/2024/10/brothers-busted-at-lewiston-apartment-with-cocaine-fentanyl-guns/>.

<sup>7</sup> Edmond D. Shenassa et al., "Safer Storage of Firearms at Home and Risk of Suicide: a Study of Protective Factors in a Nationally Representative Sample," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 58, no. 10 (2004): 841–848.

FROM SENATOR  
FALLOT ROSS

## Portland police say they are seeing rise in guns stolen from vehicles LD 1299

by Ted Homer, WGME  
Mon, January 30th 2023 at 9:54 PM

PORTLAND (WGME) -- Portland police say they're seeing a rise in car burglaries and guns stolen from vehicles.

Police say car burglaries are up 77 percent compared to this time last year.

They say they've taken reports of three guns stolen over just a few weeks and two of them in just one day.

Officers say ever since Maine got rid of requiring a permit for a concealed weapon, they've seen a rise in firearm thefts.

Police say if you have a gun in your car, keep it in a lockbox that's secured to the vehicle, because it could easily end up in the wrong hands.

"Just leaving it in a glove box or center console is not safe," Portland Police Major Robert Martin said. "It puts the public at risk, it puts innocent people at risk by doing that. The gun doesn't turn up in a good person's hands, it turns up in a criminal's hands and eventually, it will be used in a crime or against an innocent victim."

Police say it sounds simple, but lock your doors and keep valuable items, like laptops, wallets and bags, out of sight, like under a seat or locked in the trunk.

They say criminals will hardly ever break a window unless they see something worth breaking it for.

**<https://wgme.com/news/local/portland-police-guns-stolen-vehicles-cars-trucks-lock-doors-break-windows-firearms>**