

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 173

To amend chapter 44 of title 18, United States Code, to require the safe storage of firearms, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JANUARY 31, 2023

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Mr. MURPHY, Mr. CASEY, Mr. PADILLA, Mr. COONS, Mr. WYDEN, Ms. WARREN, Mr. REED, Mrs. GILLIBRAND, Mr. MARKEY, Ms. HIRONO, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. SANDERS, Ms. DUCKWORTH, Mr. MERKLEY, Mr. KAINE, Ms. BALDWIN, Mr. BOOKER, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. KING, Ms. STABENOW, Mrs. MURRAY, Mr. BROWN, Mr. KELLY, Mr. LUJÁN, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. DURBIN, and Mr. WELCH) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To amend chapter 44 of title 18, United States Code, to require the safe storage of firearms, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as “Ethan’s Law”.

5 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

6 Congress find the following:

1 (1) An estimated 4,600,000 minors in the
2 United States live in homes with at least 1 unse-
3 cured firearm.

4 (2) Seventy-three percent of children under the
5 age of 10 living in homes with firearms reported
6 knowing the location of their parents' firearms.
7 Thirty-six percent of those children reported han-
8 dling their parents' unsecured firearms.

9 (3) The presence of unsecured firearms in the
10 home increases the risk of unintentional and inten-
11 tional shootings. Over 75 percent of firearms used in
12 youth suicide attempts and unintentional firearm in-
13 juries were stored in the residence of the victim, a
14 relative, or a friend.

15 (4) The United States Secret Service and the
16 Department of Education report that in 65 percent
17 of deadly school shootings, the attacker obtained the
18 firearm from his or her own home or that of a rel-
19 ative.

20 (5) In the last decade, nearly 2,000,000 fire-
21 arms have been reported stolen. In 2016 alone,
22 238,000 firearms were reported stolen in the United
23 States. Between 2010 and 2016, police recovered
24 more than 23,000 stolen firearms across jurisdic-
25 tions that were used to commit kidnappings, armed

1 robberies, sexual assaults, murders, and other vio-
 2 lent crimes.

3 (6) Higher levels of neighborhood gun violence
 4 drive depopulation, discourage commercial activity,
 5 and decrease property values, resulting in fewer
 6 business establishments, fewer jobs, lower home val-
 7 ues, and lower home ownership rates.

8 (7) The negative economic impact of gun vio-
 9 lence in communities is tied directly to the national
 10 economy and interstate commerce.

11 (8) Congress has the power under the interstate
 12 commerce clause and other provisions of the Con-
 13 stitution of the United States to enact measures en-
 14 suring firearms are securely stored.

15 **SEC. 3. SECURE GUN STORAGE OR SAFETY DEVICE.**

16 Section 922(z) of title 18, United States Code, is
 17 amended by adding at the end the following:

18 “(4) SECURE GUN STORAGE BY OWNERS.—

19 “(A) OFFENSE.—

20 “(i) IN GENERAL.—Except as pro-
 21 vided in clause (ii), it shall be unlawful for
 22 a person to store or keep any firearm that
 23 has moved in, or that has otherwise af-
 24 fected, interstate or foreign commerce on
 25 the premises of a residence under the con-

1 trol of the person if the person knows, or
2 reasonably should know, that—

3 “(I) a minor is likely to gain ac-
4 cess to the firearm without the per-
5 mission of the parent or guardian of
6 the minor; or

7 “(II) a resident of the residence
8 is ineligible to possess a firearm under
9 Federal, State, or local law.

10 “(ii) EXCEPTION.—Clause (i) shall
11 not apply to a person if the person—

12 “(I) keeps the firearm—

13 “(aa) secure using a secure
14 gun storage or safety device; or

15 “(bb) in a location that a
16 reasonable person would believe
17 to be secure; or

18 “(II) carries the firearm on his
19 or her person or within such close
20 proximity thereto that the person can
21 readily retrieve and use the firearm as
22 if the person carried the firearm on
23 his or her person.

24 “(B) PENALTY.—

1 “(i) IN GENERAL.—Any person who
2 violates subparagraph (A) shall be fined
3 \$500 per violation.

4 “(ii) ENHANCED PENALTY.—If a per-
5 son violates subparagraph (A) and a minor
6 or a resident who is ineligible to possess a
7 firearm under Federal, State, or local law
8 obtains the firearm and causes injury or
9 death to such minor or resident, or to any
10 other individual, the person shall be fined
11 under this title, imprisoned for not more
12 than 5 years, or both.

13 “(iii) FORFEITURE OF IMPROPERLY
14 STORED FIREARM.—Any firearm stored in
15 violation of subparagraph (A) shall be sub-
16 ject to seizure and forfeiture in accordance
17 with the procedures described in section
18 924(d).

19 “(C) MINOR DEFINED.—In this paragraph,
20 the term ‘minor’ means an individual who is
21 less than 18 years of age.”.

22 **SEC. 4. FIREARM SAFE STORAGE PROGRAM.**

23 Title I of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe
24 Streets Act of 1968 (34 U.S.C. 10101 et seq.) is amended
25 by adding at the end the following:

1 **“PART PP—FIREARM SAFE STORAGE PROGRAM**

2 **“SEC. 3061. FIREARM SAFE STORAGE PROGRAM.**

3 “(a) IN GENERAL.—The Assistant Attorney General
4 shall make grants to an eligible State or Indian Tribe to
5 assist the State or Indian Tribe in carrying out the provi-
6 sions of any State or Tribal law that is functionally iden-
7 tical to section 922(z)(4) of title 18, United States Code.

8 “(b) ELIGIBLE STATE OR INDIAN TRIBE.—

9 “(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-
10 graph (2), a State or Indian Tribe shall be eligible
11 to receive grants under this section on and after the
12 earliest date as of which—

13 “(A) the State or Indian Tribe has enacted
14 a law that is functionally identical to section
15 922(z)(4) of title 18, United States Code; and

16 “(B) the attorney general of the State (or
17 comparable Tribal official) has submitted a
18 written certification to the Assistant Attorney
19 General stating that the law of the State or In-
20 dian Tribe reflects the sense of Congress in sec-
21 tion 922(z)(4)(D) of such title 18.

22 “(2) FIRST YEAR ELIGIBILITY EXCEPTION.—

23 “(A) IN GENERAL.—A covered State or In-
24 dian Tribe shall be eligible to receive a grant
25 under this section during the 1-year period be-
26 ginning on the date of enactment of this part.

1 “(B) COVERED STATE OR INDIAN TRIBE.—

2 In this paragraph, the term ‘covered State or
3 Indian Tribe’ means a State or Indian Tribe
4 that, before the date of enactment of this part,
5 enacted a law—

6 “(i) that is functionally identical to
7 section 922(z)(4) of title 18, United States
8 Code; and

9 “(ii) for which the attorney general of
10 the State (or comparable Tribal official)
11 submits a written certification to the As-
12 sistant Attorney General stating that the
13 law of the State or Indian Tribe reflects
14 the sense of Congress in section
15 922(z)(4)(D) of such title 18.

16 “(c) USE OF FUNDS.—Funds awarded under this
17 section may be used by a State or Indian Tribe to assist
18 law enforcement agencies or the courts of the State or In-
19 dian Tribe in enforcing and otherwise facilitating compli-
20 ance with any State or Tribal law functionally identical
21 to section 922(z)(4) of title 18, United States Code.

22 “(d) APPLICATION.—An eligible State or Indian
23 Tribe desiring a grant under this section shall submit to
24 the Assistant Attorney General an application at such
25 time, in such manner, and containing or accompanied by

1 such information, as the Assistant Attorney General may
2 reasonably require.

3 “(e) INCENTIVES.—For each of fiscal years 2023
4 through 2027, the Attorney General shall give affirmative
5 preference to all Bureau of Justice Assistance discre-
6 tionary grant applications of a State or Indian Tribe that
7 has enacted a law—

8 “(1) functionally identical to section 922(z)(4)
9 of title 18, United States Code; and

10 “(2) for which the attorney general of the State
11 (or comparable Tribal official) submits a written cer-
12 tification to the Assistant Attorney General stating
13 that the law of the State or Indian Tribe reflects the
14 sense of Congress in section 922(z)(4)(D) of such
15 title 18.”.

16 **SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

17 Paragraph (4) of section 922(z) of title 18, United
18 States Code, as added by section 3, is amended by adding
19 at the end the following:

20 “(D) SENSE OF CONGRESS RELATING TO
21 LIABILITY.—It is the sense of Congress that—

22 “(i) failure to comply with subpara-
23 graph (A) constitutes negligence under any
24 relevant statute or common law rule; and

1 “(ii) when a violation of subparagraph
2 (A) is the but-for cause of a harm caused
3 by the discharge of a firearm, such viola-
4 tion should be deemed to be the legal or
5 proximate cause of such harm, regardless
6 of whether such harm was also the result
7 of an intentional tort.”.

8 **SEC. 6. SEVERABILITY.**

9 If any provision of this Act, or an amendment made
10 by this Act, or the application of such provision to any
11 person or circumstance, is held to be invalid, the remain-
12 der of this Act, or an amendment made by this Act, or
13 the application of such provision to other persons or cir-
14 cumstances, shall not be affected.

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