



Policy Option:

SB 1007: Banning Large Capacity Ammunition Magazines

What does it mean?

Large capacity ammunition magazines feed ammunition automatically into the chamber of a firearm. In some cases, large capacity magazines can hold up to 100 rounds of ammunition, which enables the user to fire many times without reloading. Large capacity magazines are typically associated with machine guns or semi-automatic assault weapons, and are a particular danger because they increase the capacity and lethality of the weapons that use them.

Assault weapons and large capacity ammunition magazines were banned at the federal level from 1994 until 2004, when Congress and the President allowed the ban to expire.

What would it *really* do?

A ban on large capacity ammunition magazines would make it unlawful to manufacture, sell and possess any large capacity ammunition feeding devices.

Since the federal assault weapons ban expired, police departments across the country have experienced an increased presence of these high-powered weapons on the streets.¹ Crime data also support the conclusion that a ban on large capacity magazines would have a greater impact on gun crime than a ban on assault weapons alone. Guns equipped with large capacity magazines were involved in 14 to 26% of gun crimes prior to the assault weapon ban in 1994, as compared with assault weapons, which accounted for 6% of gun crimes. Thus, a ban on large capacity ammunition magazines would reduce the capacity and lethality of many more firearms than would a ban on assault weapons alone.²

What does the public think?

- Eight in 10 Illinois voters favor a law to ban assault weapons. More people with firearms behavior (including voters who are gun owners, members of the NRA, hunters and/or FOID cardholders) strongly favor an assault weapons ban (44%) than strongly oppose it (31%). When it comes to supporting a ban on the sale and possession of powerful, military-grade fifty-caliber rifles, 77% of Illinois voters support such a measure. To read more polling results from the 2007 Voter Survey on Gun Regulations, go to www.icpgv.org/icpgv_polling.html.
- National surveys conducted in 2000 and 2002 found that 67% - 71% of adults favored the federal ban on assault weapons, and 65% of registered voters favored renewal of the ban.³
- In November 2006, more than 85% of Cook County voters supported a referendum calling for a state-wide ban on assault weapons.

What are the facts?

- Victims killed by assault weapons are shot an average of 3.1 times, compared with 2.1 times of those shot with other types of guns.⁴
- Guns equipped with large capacity magazines were involved in 14 to 26% of gun crimes prior to the assault weapon ban in 1994.⁵

Have Other States or Jurisdictions Enacted Similar Legislation?

California, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York have enacted laws banning large capacity ammunition magazines. Chicago bans the transfer, acquisition or possession of any ammunition magazine having the capacity of more than 12 rounds.⁶

Final Thought

Banning large capacity ammunition magazines has wide-ranging support from citizens across Illinois, law enforcement, the medical community, and both Republican and Democratic legislators. Average citizens don't want or need these deadly magazines that increase the lethality of weapons.

Pending Legislation

SB1007 (Amended by Sen. Kotowski)

This bill would prohibit the manufacture, sale, purchase, and possession of any large capacity ammunition feeding device, like the one purportedly used in the Virginia Tech shootings.

¹ Kevin Johnson, *Police Needing Heavier Weapons*, USA Today, Feb. 20, 2007, at 1.

² Legal Community Against Violence, *Regulating Guns in America: An Evaluation and Comparative Analysis of Federal, State and Selected Local Gun Laws*. San Francisco: Legal Community Against Violence, 2006.

³ CBS News/New York Times poll (May 2000). ABC News/Washington Post poll (May 2000). Lake Snell & Perry Associates, Inc. poll (sponsored by The Campaign for a Progressive Future and The Violence Prevention Campaign). *Findings on Assault Weapons from Battleground Omnibus Survey*. July 2002.

⁴ Jeffrey A. Roth & Christopher S. Koper, *Impact Evaluation of the Public Safety and Recreational Firearm Use Protection Act of 1994 96* (1997).

⁵ Legal Community Against Violence, *Regulating Guns in America: An Evaluation and Comparative Analysis of Federal, State and Selected Local Gun Laws*. San Francisco: Legal Community Against Violence, 2006.

⁶ Legal Community Against Violence, *Regulating Guns in America: An Evaluation and Comparative Analysis of Federal, State and Selected Local Gun Laws*. San Francisco: Legal Community Against Violence, 2006.