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## Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee

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### HB 1240

**Brief Description:** Establishing firearms-related safety measures to increase public safety.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Peterson, Senn, Alvarado, Walen, Street, Springer, Simmons, Reeves, Reed, Ormsby, Kloba, Fitzgibbon, Duerr, Doglio, Berry, Bateman, Fey, Davis, Ramel, Bergquist, Fosse, Pollet, Lekanoff, Macri, Gregerson and Santos; by request of Office of the Governor, Attorney General.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits the manufacture, importation, distribution, sale, or offer for sale of any assault weapon, subject to various exceptions for licensed firearm manufacturers and dealers, and for individuals who inherit an assault weapon.
- Provides a violation of these restrictions constitutes a gross misdemeanor and is actionable under the Consumer Protection Act.

**Hearing Date:** 1/17/23

**Staff:** John Burzynski (786-7133).

#### **Background:**

##### Firearms Regulations.

Firearms and other weapons are regulated under Washington law. Among other restrictions, the state prohibits all persons from manufacturing, owning, buying, selling, loaning, furnishing, transporting, possessing, or controlling any machine gun, bump-fire stock, undetectable firearm, short-barreled shotgun, or short-barreled rifle, subject to various exceptions.

Washington does not specifically define and regulate a general class of weapons designated as

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assault weapons, but the state has established various restrictions on a group of weapons classified as semiautomatic assault rifles. State law defines a semiautomatic assault rifle as any rifle which utilizes a portion of the energy of a firing cartridge to extract the fired cartridge case and chamber the next round, and which requires a separate pull of the trigger to fire each cartridge, but this definition excludes antique firearms, any firearm that has been made permanently inoperable, and any firearm that is manually operated by bolt, pump, lever, or slide action.

Restrictions on semiautomatic assault rifles include:

- No dealer may deliver a semiautomatic assault rifle to the purchaser until: (1) the purchaser provides proof they have completed a recognized firearm safety training program within the last five years; (2) the dealer is notified by the chief of police or sheriff that the purchaser is eligible to possess a firearm and the purchase is approved; and (3) 10 business days have elapsed since the purchase application or, in the case of a transfer, 10 business days have elapsed from the date a background check was initiated.
- The purchaser of a semiautomatic assault rifle must be personally known to the dealer or present clear evidence of his or her identity.
- Subject to various exceptions, a person under 21 years of age may not purchase a semiautomatic assault rifle, and no person may sell or transfer a semiautomatic assault rifle to a person under 21 years of age.

Federal law previously restricted certain semiautomatic assault weapons, subject to various exceptions and a sunset provision. These federal restrictions expired in 2004. Nine other states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws imposing various restrictions on assault weapons.

#### The Consumer Protection Act.

The Consumer Protection Act (CPA) prohibits unfair methods of competition, and unfair or deceptive acts or practices in trade or commerce. If a person is injured in their business or property by a violation of the CPA, the person may bring a civil action to enjoin further violations and recover actual damages, costs, and reasonable attorney's fees. In addition, the court may award treble damages up to \$25,000. The Attorney General may also bring an action in the name of the state or on behalf of persons residing in the state, against any person to enjoin violations of the CPA and obtain restitution. The Attorney General may also seek civil penalties up to the statutorily authorized maximums against any person who violates the CPA.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

The manufacture, importation, distribution, sale, or offer for sale of any assault weapon is prohibited.

The term "assault weapon" is defined to include various kinds of firearms, including:

- semiautomatic rifles with an overall length of less than 30 inches;
- semiautomatic centerfire rifles that have the capacity to accept a detachable magazine and

- have one or more additional features listed in the bill;
- semiautomatic centerfire rifles with a fixed magazine with the capacity to accept more than 10 rounds;
- semiautomatic pistols that have the capacity to accept a detachable magazine and have one or more additional features listed in the bill;
- semiautomatic shotguns that have one or more additional features listed in the bill;
- specific firearm models identified in the bill; and
- conversion kits and parts that can be used to assemble an assault weapon or convert a firearm into an assault weapon, if the parts are in the possession of or under the control of the same person.

The term "assault weapon" excludes antique firearms, firearms that have been made permanently inoperable, and firearms that are manually operated by bolt, pump, lever, or slide action.

The restrictions on assault weapons are subject to several exceptions:

- Licensed firearms manufacturers are authorized to manufacture, import, distribute, offer for sale, and sell assault weapons for the purpose of sale to the armed forces of the United States or Washington, or to state or federal law enforcement agencies for law enforcement purposes.
- Licensed firearms dealers are authorized to import, distribute, offer for sale, and sell assault weapons for the purpose of sale to the armed forces of the United States or Washington, or to law enforcement agencies in Washington for law enforcement purposes.
- Licensed firearms dealers are authorized to distribute, offer for sale, and sell assault weapons that were acquired from an individual legally authorized to possess or transfer the weapon, for the purpose of selling or transferring the weapon to a person who does not reside in Washington.
- Any person may acquire possession of an assault weapon by operation of law upon the death of the weapon's former owner, if that former owner was in legal possession of the weapon and the person who acquires possession can establish such provenance.

A violation of these restrictions is classified as a gross misdemeanor. Additionally, a violation is classified as a matter vitally affecting the public interest, not reasonable in relation to the development and preservation of business, and an unfair or deceptive act in trade or commerce and an unfair method of competition for the purpose of applying the Consumer Protection Act.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.