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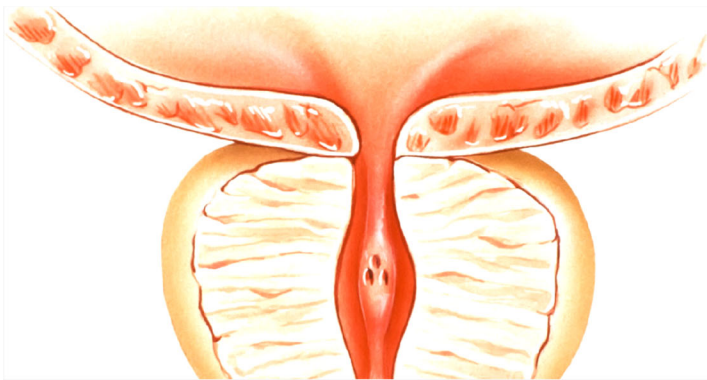


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## POLITICS

# Gov. J.B. Pritzker signs comprehensive gun bill banning sale of military-style firearms

By Rick Pearson and Jeremy Gerner  
Chicago Tribune • Jan 10, 2023 at 9:23 pm



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Colleagues applaud state Rep. Bob Morgan after the passage of a bill banning assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines on Jan. 10, 2023, at the Illinois Capitol in Springfield. Morgan, a sponsor of the bill, was present at the Highland Park mass shooting on July 4th. (Brian Cassella / Chicago Tribune)

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SPRINGFIELD — Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed into law Tuesday night a comprehensive measure that supporters called one of the nation’s toughest bans on military style firearms, immediately prohibiting their sale and giving current owners until Jan. 1 to register gun serial numbers with Illinois State Police.

“Illinois now officially prohibits the sale and distribution of these mass killing machines and rapid fire devices,” said Pritzker, who was inaugurated for a second term on Monday during a ceremony in the Capitol. “I’m signing this legislation tonight so that it can take immediate effect and we can end the sale of these weapons of war.”

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Pritzker signed the bill just hours after House Democrats led final passage of the measure on a 68-41 vote, and a day after Senate Democrats approved it 34-20. Pritzker and legislators acted amid warnings from most Republicans and gun-rights advocates that the new law was unconstitutional and would face a legal challenge.

The House vote on the gun ban came on the final scheduled day of action for the lame-duck 102nd General Assembly, during which Democrats also sent Pritzker a bill that would protect health care professionals and people seeking an abortion or gender-affirming care in Illinois from restrictive laws in other states.

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The new 103rd General Assembly—all 118 House and 59 Senate members with Democratic supermajorities in each chamber—is set to begin a new session after they are inaugurated on Wednesday.

With Pritzker's signature, Illinois became the ninth state to ban military style firearms. The effort to achieve the ban accelerated following a deadly mass shooting at the Fourth of July parade in Highland Park, where the alleged shooter used an AR-15 style of weapon.

"We got this done for all the victims, the spouses, the children, parents and friends and loved ones who are no longer with us, and for those who have survived mass shootings but were injured," Pritzker said after reciting the names of the seven people killed at the parade.

"No single law...will end gun violence once and for all. So we must keep fighting, voting and protesting to ensure that future generations will only have to read about massacres," he said. "It's our burden and our mandate, one that we carry with solemn honor for our children, who will grow up in a better and safer world."

The new law immediately bans the delivery, sale, import and purchase of so-called "assault weapons." After Jan. 1, people who possess an unregistered firearm covered by the ban face a misdemeanor for a first offense and a felony for subsequent offenses.

The new law also immediately bans the delivery, sale or purchase of large capacity ammunition magazines of more than 10 rounds for long guns and 15 rounds for handguns. As of April 10, current owners' possession of large-capacity magazines will be allowed only on private property, at a firing range or a sport shooting competition or at a federal licensed gun dealer for repairs. Violations will be subject to a \$1,000 fine.

In addition, devices that increase the firing rates of a firearm, known as "switches," to turn them into semi-automatic or automatic weapons, are immediately banned and someone in possession would face a felony count for each device.

The new law also speeds up to July from January the existing requirement for universal background checks by federal firearm dealers or the State Police for private gun sales.

It also modifies the state's current "red flag" law that allows relatives and police to seek a court approved firearm restraining order to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people. The new law extends the duration of the orders from six months to a year.



Gov. J.B. Pritzker hugs gun control advocate Maria Pike after he signed comprehensive legislation to ban military style firearms on Jan. 10, 2023, at the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield. Pike lost her son, Ricky, to gun violence. Advocate Delphine Cherry, third from right, who lost her children Tyesa and Tyler to gun violence, wipes away tears. (Brian Cassella / Chicago Tribune)

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State Rep. Tony McCombie, an opponent of the military-style firearms ban bill, speaks to co-sponsor Rep. Bob Morgan before the legislation passed on Jan. 10, 2023, at the Illinois Capitol in Springfield. (Brian Cassella / Chicago Tribune)

Most Republicans contended the legislation would do nothing to prevent crime, would run counter to rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court involving Second Amendment rights and would face a court challenge upon becoming law.

State Rep. Blaine Wilhour of Beecher City, a member of the ultraconservative Republican House Freedom Caucus, accused Pritzker and majority Democrats of continuing to “allow our Constitution and our freedoms to be shredded.”

“A government unchecked, a government willing to defy our Constitution is a government that is completely out of control,” he said. “You can sit here and dictate whatever you want today. Maybe the political winds are in your favor here today. But I can tell you that we will not comply and you’re not going to do a darn thing about it because the law, the Constitution and the founding principles are on our side.”

Democratic House Speaker Emanuel “Chris” Welch of Hillside declared that the Democratic-controlled legislature and Pritzker “reached a deal on one of the strongest assault weapons bans in the country.”

“It’s time that we protect Illinois communities. It’s time that we protect Illinois families. Let’s end families

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Two House Republicans — outgoing House GOP Leader Jim Durkin of Western Springs and state Rep. Bradley Stephens of Rosemont — joined Democrats in voting for the bill. Four House Democrats voted against it: state Reps. Anthony DeLuca of Chicago Heights, Michael Halpin of Rock Island, Larry Walsh of Elwood and Lance Yednock of Ottawa.



House Speaker Emanuel "Chris" Welch speaks to Reps. Theresa Mah, center, and Denyse Wang Stoneback after the passage of the gun bill on Jan. 10, 2023, in Springfield. (Brian Cassella / Chicago Tribune)

Democrats in the Senate voted 41-16 and the House followed with a 70-39 roll call to send Pritzker a measure he supports that would extend abortion and transgender protections to patients as well as health care workers who come from other states.

The measure was prompted by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in June that overturned a federal right of women to seek an abortion and turned the issue over to the individual states.

Illinois has enshrined a right to an abortion in state law, making it one of the most liberal states on the issue in the country. Pritzker also has called for the next General Assembly to submit to voters in 2024 a proposal to put the right to abortion in the state constitution.

"Right now there are states across the country that are trying to criminalize parents for seeking medical care for their children, seeking to criminalize pregnant people from being able to make decisions about their bodies, states that are criminalizing people who are looking for help," said state Sen. Celina Villanueva, D-Chicago.

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Outgoing state Sen. Darren Bailey of Xenia, whose evangelical Christian-based opposition to abortion was one factor in his unsuccessful challenge to Pritzker in the Nov. 8 election for governor, called the measure “pure evil” before reading a Bible verse.

“This is wrong,” he concluded. “God help us.”

The Senate’s legislation is closely aligned to a House proposal that passed last week. Among its aims is expanding the pool of health care providers who can perform certain abortion procedures in an effort to ease access amid increased demand for services from Illinois abortion clinics.

The measure also would authorize the state Department of Public Health to partner with nonprofit groups to administer grants for abortion training programs, with underserved areas and transportation hubs given a priority.

Additionally, the measure authorizes protections for the transgender community and their access to gender-affirming care.

Also Tuesday, the legislature sent Pritzker a bill to create “closing fund” of about \$400 million for use at Pritzker’s discretion in an effort to seal deals to attract businesses to the state. The measure was approved on an 86-23 House vote and 40-15 Senate roll call.

The measure includes a provision that would prohibit the governor from using any of the money to help the Chicago Bears develop a new football stadium and entertainment complex if they complete a purchase agreement for the former Arlington International Racecourse property.

The Bears have said they would not need public subsidies for construction of a new stadium, but would need assistance for developing the remainder of the 326-acre property. Pritzker has shown no interest in providing direct public financing to help the Bears.

“If the Bears are choosing to move to Arlington Heights they can’t go to the state and say give us some money out of the closing fund to do it,” said state Rep. Mike Zalewski, a Riverside Democrat who sponsored the measure. “I think they are going to continue to pursue sort of different avenues of relief. I don’t know what that will look like in the next General Assembly.”

The measure also would provide additional incentives aimed at attracting electric vehicle and vehicle component suppliers to locate in Illinois.

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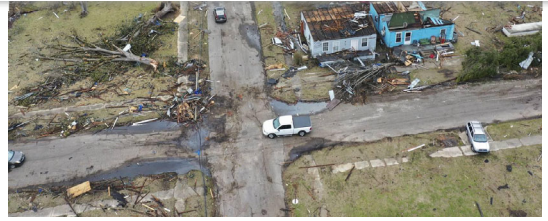
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