

NEWS:

Senate Could Act Tuesday on Bill to Ban Targeted Semi-Automatic Firearms

June 15, 2018 -- Even though a Senate committee last week refused to release a bill to ban the manufacture, sale, transport, and transfer of "assault weapons" in Delaware, it could still be acted on by the full chamber on Tuesday.

[Senate Bill 163](#) would explicitly ban dozens of semi-automatic rifles, shotguns, and pistols identified by model and manufacturer in the legislation. It would also prohibit "copycat weapons" -- defined as any semi-automatic centerfire rifle that accepts a detachable magazine and has at least two cosmetic or functional attributes specified in the proposal.



The legislation failed to clear the Senate Judicial & Community Affairs Committee last week. While the inability of any bill to win committee approval would normally doom its chances for further consideration, SB 163 could be a rare exception.

Speaking on the Senate Floor Thursday, State Senate Majority Leader Dave McBride, D-Hawk's Nest, read the following statement:

Madam President, I wanted to address a matter that many of us have been hearing about in this building, in our districts, and in the press. Last week, Senate Bill 163 was heard in the Senate Judicial and Community Affairs Committee. I put SB 163 in the Judicial and Community Affairs Committee because of where it falls in the Delaware Code.

I believe strongly in the idea that with very few exceptions, the committee process should be objective. That was the case with SB 163, as it has been for every other gun control bill I have assigned. As all of us know, the committee did not release SB 163. Although I am a supporter of the legislation, I do not begrudge anybody's right to oppose it.

But it's plain to anyone paying attention that there is a great deal of public interest in this legislation, on all sides. It is every senator's prerogative to support or oppose any bill; but when an issue like this garners such an extraordinary level of interest and passion, every senator should also have the opportunity -- if not the responsibility -- to have their positions on the record.

It is therefore my intent for the Senate to consider this legislation on the floor as soon as we return to session Tuesday. It's my hope that we will have a committee report available at this time, but in any event this is a critical issue and it will be considered Tuesday.

I commend Sen. Townsend (the bill's prime sponsor) for taking the time to allow ample public input and a full debate, above and beyond what was required, on this legislation. After three months of public interest, of commentary in and out of this building, and of attention from the media, all of us -- supporters and skeptics alike -- would be remiss not to allow this debate to reach the full Senate or to receive an up-or-down vote.

Opponents say the bill may violate the state's constitutional guarantees on gun ownership and use, which are broader than those contained in the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Additionally, they contend the guns designated in the legislation are not functionally different than any other semi-automatic firearm and that targeting them for elimination is arbitrary and baseless.

"Passing laws to restrict basic firearms ownership rights, guaranteed by both our federal and state constitutions, is not the answer to reducing the anomalous incidents of mass violence perpetrated by a few deranged individuals," said State House Minority Leader Danny Short, R-Seaford, commenting on the bill earlier this year.



State Rep. Danny Short

"True assault weapons -- rifles capable of fully automatic fire -- are already illegal for most Americans to own and have been for decades," Rep. Short said. "The proposed assault weapon sales ban is a misguided effort that will only serve to further politically polarize Delawareans with no hope of making any real impact on the desired goal of reducing isolated incidents of mass violence."