
UNLOAD: Guns in the Hands of Artists -
Ephemera

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Summer 2018

#UNLOAD: Guns in the Hands of Artists Timeline of US Gun Control Laws Rewall Panel

Fairfield University Art Museum

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A Timeline of Gun Control Laws in the United States

1791 – The first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution are ratified. The second states: “A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.”

1934/38 – The National Firearms Act, in response to gang activity like the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre, imposes a tax on the manufacturing, selling, and transporting of some firearms. It also defines a group of people who cannot purchase guns, such as convicted felons, and mandates that gun sellers keep customer records.

1939 – The U.S. Supreme Court rules in *United States v. Miller* that Congress could regulate the interstate selling of a short barrel shotgun, stating that there was no evidence that a sawed off shotgun “has some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well-regulated militia,” and thus “we cannot say that the Second Amendment guarantees the right to keep and bear such an instrument.”

1967 – Backed by Governor Ronald Regan and the National Rifle Association – and developed in part as a reaction to the emergence of the Black Panther Party – The Mulford Act restricts the open carry of loaded firearms in California.

1968 – Following the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Attorney General Robert Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Gun Control Act of 1968 bans importing guns that have “no sporting purpose,” imposes age restrictions on the purchase of handguns (gun owners have to be 21), prohibits felons, the mentally ill, and others from purchasing guns, and requires that all manufactured or imported guns have a serial number.

1986 – The Firearm Owners Protection Act is passed by Congress prohibiting a national registry of dealer records, limiting ATF inspections to once per year (unless there are multiple infractions), softening what is defined as “engaging in the business” of selling firearms, and allowing licensed dealers to sell firearms at “gun shows” in their state. It also loosened regulations on the sale and transfer of ammunition.

1993 – The Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 requires that background checks be completed before a gun is purchased from a licensed dealer, manufacturer or importer. It also establishes the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), which is maintained by the FBI.

1994 – Tucked into the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, the Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act bans the manufacture of certain semi-automatic firearms for civilian use from September 1994 to September 2004.

2005 – The Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act is signed by President George W. Bush to prevent gun manufacturers from being named in federal or state civil suits by those who were victims of crimes involving guns made by that company.

2008 – *District of Columbia v. Heller* changes a nearly 70-year precedent set by *Miller* in 1939 by challenging the constitutionality of a 32-year-old handgun ban in Washington, D.C., and finding that, “the handgun ban and the trigger-lock requirement (as applied to self-defense) violate the Second Amendment.”

2013 – Following the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, both the Manchin-Toomey Bill, which would have required background checks for all gun sales between private dealers, including gun shows and websites, and the Assault Weapons Ban, which would have banned certain kinds of semi-automatic weapons, fail to pass Congressional votes.

2018 – More than 100 federal gun control measures have been proposed between 2013 and 2018. All have failed to pass Congressional votes. More than 200 state-level gun laws have been passed.

Adapted by International Coalition of Sites of Conscience from:
<http://time.com/5169210/us-gun-control-laws-history-timeline/>