



D.C. Council Considers Simpler Handgun Registration

By [Tom Sherwood](#)

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Almost four years after the U.S. Supreme Court threw out the District's strict handgun ban, the city is still trying to remove administrative restrictions that critics say make it too hard to register handguns in the home.

In June 2008, the Supreme Court threw out the city's ban that had been in place since 1977, saying it violated the Constitution's Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms. The city lost its argument that handguns should be banned to keep crime from being worse than it is with the flow of illegal handgun use.

Despite the clear high court ruling, the District still enacted a series of administrative steps restricting how a handgun could be licensed, what training an owner needs, and when or where the guns had to be tested and reregistered.

"The District has one of the most draconian set of restrictions for owning a gun of any place in the country," said Roger Pilon, of the Cato Institute.

At a hearing on the city's police department, Council Judiciary Committee Chairman Phil Mendelson said the D.C. Council would soon vote on several changes to make handgun registration simpler for the owners.

"We realize that there are some glitches in the law that we ought to fix to make it just a little bit easier for individuals who wish to possess firearms legally," he said.

Among other changes, the bill makes it easier to get ownership training, eliminates routine vision tests, cuts down on re-registrations and eliminates restrictions on types of ammunition.

Mendelson and Police Chief Cathy Lanier said the changes would meet the law and make it easier to administer. Only about 1,500 handguns have been registered in this city of more than 600,000 residents.

Some feared the city's crime rate would worsen without the ban, but they say it hasn't.

"I don't think it's going to impact enforcement at all," Lanier said. "I think there are reasonable changes being made, and this is what people have been saying, it's so difficult."

"I'm not aware that any people who've lawfully registered a gun have then committed crimes with those guns," Mendelson said.

The Cato Institute, which fought the handgun ban, said its studies show that legal handgun ownership doesn't worsen crime and said it's good the city is easing registration.

"It is being spurred, perhaps largely, by the threat of future litigation and the threat from a republican house," Pilon said.

Several lawyers say the District has to ease gun ownership requirements or it will face new lawsuits or congressional action.