

**THIRD READING**

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Bill No: SB 948  
Author: Arreguín (D), et al.  
Amended: 5/14/26  
Vote: 21

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SENATE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE: 5-1, 3/17/26  
AYES: Arreguín, Caballero, Pérez, Reyes, Wiener  
NOES: Seyarto

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 5-2, 5/14/26  
AYES: Cervantes, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab  
NOES: Seyarto, Dahle

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**SUBJECT:** Firearms: safety certificates

**SOURCE:** Brady Campaign  
Consumer Protection Policy Center at the University of San Diego  
School of Law

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**DIGEST:** This bill 1) requires personal firearm importers to obtain a firearm safety certificate within 180 days of moving to California; and 2) requires all firearm safety certificate applicants, commencing July 1, 2028, to complete a firearm training course that includes instruction on firearm safety and live-fire shooting exercises.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Provides that 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. (U.S. Const., 2nd Amend.)
- 2) Specifies that a felony is a crime that is punishable by death, by imprisonment in the state prison, or, notwithstanding any other law, by imprisonment in a

county jail, as specified, and specifies that every other crime or public offense is a misdemeanor except those offenses that are classified as infractions. (Penal (Pen.) Code, § 17, subd. (a).)

- 3) Generally prohibits the sale, lease or transfer of firearms unless the person has been issued a license by the Department of Justice (DOJ) and establishes various exceptions to this prohibition. (Pen. Code, §§ 26500-26625.)
- 4) Provides that a license to sell firearms is subject to forfeiture for any violation of a number of specified prohibitions and requirements, with limited exceptions. (Pen. Code, §§ 26800-26915.)
- 5) Provides that where neither party to a firearms transaction holds a dealer's license (i.e. a "private party transaction"), the parties shall complete the transaction through a licensed firearms dealer. (Pen. Code, § 27545.)
- 6) Sets forth various exemptions to the requirement that a private party transaction occur through a licensed dealer (Pen. Code, §§ 27850-27970.)
- 7) Establishes a process by which an individual may obtain and renew a license to carry a pistol, revolver or other firearm capable of being concealed upon the person, also known as a Concealed Carry Weapon (CCW) license. (Pen. Code, § 26150 et. seq.)
- 8) Provides that for new CCW applicants, the course of training for issuance of a license must meet the following criteria:
  - a) The course shall be no less than 16 hours in length.
  - b) The course shall include instruction on firearm safety, firearm handling, shooting technique, safe storage, legal methods to transport firearms and securing firearms in vehicles, laws governing where permit holders may carry firearms, laws regarding the permissible use of a firearm, and laws regarding the permissible use of lethal force in self-defense.
  - c) The course shall include a component, no less than one hour in length, on mental health and mental health resources.
  - d) Except for the component on mental health and mental health resources, the course shall be taught and supervised by firearms instructors certified by DOJ.

- e) The course shall require students to pass a written examination to demonstrate their understanding of the covered topics.
  - f) The course shall include live-fire shooting exercises on a firing range and shall include a demonstration by the applicant of safe handling of, and shooting proficiency with, each firearm that the applicant is applying to be licensed to carry. (Pen. Code, § 26165, subd. (a)(1)-(6).)
- 9) Defines a “personal firearm importer” as a non-licensed individual who has moved into the State of California, owns a firearm that is legal within the state, and intends to possess that firearm within the state, as specified. (Pen. Code, § 17000.)
- 10) Requires that a personal firearm importer does one of the following within 60 days of bringing a firearm into California:
- a) Submit a report to DOJ including information concerning that individual and a description of the firearm in question, as specified.
  - b) Sell or transfer the firearm via private party transaction, as specified.
  - c) Sell or transfer the firearm to a licensed dealer, as specified; or,
  - d) Sell or transfer the firearm to a sheriff or police department. (Pen. Code, § 27560, subd. (a).)
- 11) Establishes the intent of the Legislature in enacting specified provisions to require that persons who obtain firearms have a basic familiarity with those firearms, including, but not limited to, the safe handling and storage of those firearms. (Pen. Code, §31610)
- 12) Requires DOJ to develop firearm safety certificates to be issued by instructors certified by the department to those persons who have complied with specified requirements regarding firearm safety, and which expire 5 years after the date of issuance. (Pen. Code, §31655, subds. (a), (c).)
- 13) Prohibits a licensed firearm dealer from delivering a firearm unless the person receiving the firearm presents to the dealer a valid firearm safety certificate. Requires the firearm dealer to retain a photocopy of the firearm safety certificate as proof of compliance. (Pen. Code, § 26840, subd. (a).)
- 14) Prohibits a person from purchasing or receiving any firearm, except an antique firearm, without a valid firearm safety certificate, except that in the case of a

handgun, an unexpired handgun safety certificate may be used. (Pen. Code, § 31615, subd. (a).)

- 15) Prohibits a person from selling, delivering, loaning, or transferring any firearm, except an antique firearm, to any person who does not have a valid firearm safety certificate, except that in the case of a handgun, an unexpired handgun safety certificate may be used. (Pen. Code, § 31615, subd. (a).)
- 16) Provides that a person who violates the above prohibition is guilty of a misdemeanor. (Pen. Code, § 31615, subd. (b).)
- 17) Provides that a DOJ-certified instructor shall not issue a firearm safety certificate to any person who has not complied with specified safety requirements or who is under 18, a violation of which is grounds for the revocation of the instructor's certification. (Pen. Code, § 31625.)
- 18) Requires DOJ to develop a firearm safety certificate instruction manual in various languages, as specified. (Pen. Code, § 31630.)
- 19) Requires the DOJ to certify firearm safety certificate instructors and prescribe a minimum level of skill, knowledge and competency for all such instructors, as specified. (Pen. Code, § 31635.)
- 20) Requires the DOJ to develop a written objective test in various languages, passage of which is a prerequisite to obtaining a firearm safety certificate, and to develop a study guide for that test. (Pen. Code, §§ 31640, 31641, 31645.)
- 21) Contains various exemptions to the firearm safety certificate requirement, including for active and retired peace officers, licensed firearm dealers, federally licensed collectors, concealed carry permit holders, hunting license holders, and specified individuals who receive a firearm via operation of law. (Pen. Code § 31700.)

This bill:

- 1) Prohibits a person from bringing any firearm, except an antique firearm, into this state without obtaining a valid firearm safety certificate within 180 days of bringing that firearm into the state if the person is required to report the importation of the firearm to the DOJ.
- 2) Provides that a violation of this prohibition is punishable as a misdemeanor.

- 3) Specifies that this prohibition does not apply to a person if evidence of that violation arises only as the result of the person applying for a firearm safety certificate after the expiration of the 180-day period.
- 4) Extends the timeframe for the completion of other requirements related to personal firearm importers from 60 to 180 days.
- 5) Requires a personal firearm importer that elects to retain an imported firearm and report it to the DOJ pursuant to existing law to obtain a valid firearm safety certificate and include a copy of the certificate in the report.
- 6) Requires an applicant for a firearm safety certificate on or after July 1, 2028 to complete a training course within the prior year that meets all of the following conditions:
  - a) The training shall be no less than 4 hours in length, including at least one hour of live shooting.
  - b) The training shall include instruction on several specified topics, including federal and state laws related to the possession, transportation and storage of firearms (including the transfer of a firearm), safe handling of firearms and fundamentals of shooting, and how to legally relinquish and voluntarily surrender a firearm.
  - c) The training shall be taught and supervised by firearms instructors certified by the DOJ pursuant to existing law.
  - d) The live fire shooting exercises shall take place on a firing range and shall include a demonstration by the applicant of safe handling of firearms and basic firearm shooting proficiency.
- 7) Specifies that the training course requirement shall not apply to individuals with valid concealed carry permits.
- 8) Specifies that its training requirement does not apply to the categories of individuals specified in existing law that are exempt from the firearm safety certificate requirement.
- 9) Specifies that the DOJ may promulgate regulations and provide additional information for its implementation, and that the Dealers' Record of Sale (DROS) Special Account may be used, upon appropriation by the Legislature, for any costs associated with the law's implementation and ongoing expenses.

## Comments

Existing law requires a person to obtain an FSC before purchasing or receiving any firearm except an antique firearm and requires the recipient of the sale, delivery, loan or transfer of any firearm except an antique firearm to possess a valid FSC. A violation of these requirements is punishable as a misdemeanor. Exempt from this requirement are concealed carry permit holders, active and retired peace officers, licensed firearm dealers, federally licensed collectors, hunting licensees, and specified individuals who receive a firearm via operation of law. To obtain an FSC, an applicant 18 years of age or older must pass an objective written test (developed by DOJ, administered by a DOJ-certified instructor, and required to cover various specified topics) with a passing grade of at least 75%. FSCs are issued by the instructors that administer the FSC test and are valid for 5 years from the date of issue. Notably, there is no requirement that firearm owners regularly update or renew their FSC – once an FSC expires, an individual is not required to obtain a new.

Under existing law, “personal firearm importers” are individuals who move into the state of California to establish residency, own a firearm and intend to possess that firearm within the state. The law requires importers to take one of four actions with respect to the imported firearms within 60 days of entering the state: 1) submit a report to the DOJ with information regarding the CA-compliant firearm(s); 2) sell or transfer the firearm(s) via private party transfer; 3) sell or transfer the firearm to a licensed dealer; or 4) sell or transfer the firearm to a county sheriff’s office or local police department. Firearms that may be legally possessed in another state but not in California (e.g., unsafe handguns and certain assault-style weapons) may only be sold or transferred pursuant to options (2)-(4).

This bill prohibits a personal firearm importer from bringing any firearm, except an antique firearm, into this state without obtaining an FSC within 180 days of importing the firearm, provided the person intends to continue to possess the firearm rather than sell or transfer it. A violation of this prohibition is punishable as a misdemeanor under the importation statute, not the FSC statute that this requirement amends. The bill also specifies that this prohibition does not apply to a person if evidence of that violation arises only as the result of the person applying for an FSC after the expiration of the 180-day period. one unless they purchase or receive a new firearm.

The second major component of this bill is a requirement that an applicant for an FSC on or after July 1, 2028, must complete a course of training that meets several specifications. The bill requires that the training be at least 4 hours in length, with

at least one hour of live shooting, and cover seven specified topics, including state and federal firearm laws, safe firearm handling and shooting fundamentals, how to properly relinquish a firearm, and the importance of secure storage, among others. The training must be taught and supervised by DOJ Certified Instructors, and the live fire shooting exercises must include a demonstration by the applicant of safe handling of firearms and basic firearm shooting proficiency.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Unknown costs, potentially in excess of \$100,000, for the Department of Justice (DOJ) to process applications for FSCs for personal firearms importers. These costs would be offset by application fee revenues. (Firearm Safety and Enforcement Special Fund)
- Unknown fee revenue gains, potentially in the mid-hundreds of thousands of dollars annually, related to the issuance of new FSCs for personal firearms importers. The \$15 of the \$25 FSC application fee is deposited into the Firearm Safety and Enforcement Special Fund.
- Unknown, potentially significant court workload cost pressures to the extent enforcement actions are taken against personal firearms importers for failure to obtain an FSC within 120 days.
- Costs (local funds, General Fund) to the counties to incarcerate people convicted of the misdemeanor created by this bill. Actual incarceration costs will depend on the number of convictions and the length of each sentence.

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 5/14/26)

Brady California (co-source)

Consumer Protection Policy Center/USD School of Law (co-source)

California Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians

Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund

Giffords

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Students Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Team Enough - UC Berkeley Chapter

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 5/14/26)

California Rifle and Pistol Association

California Waterfowl Association

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Delta Waterfowl

Gun Owners of California, INC.

National Rifle Association - Institute for Legislative Action

Safari Club International

Multiple individuals

Prepared by: Alex Barnett / PUB. S. /  
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