

Resolution Supporting Signature Gathering for I-594

An initiative to the legislature to require criminal background checks on gun sales

WHEREAS, gun injuries and deaths in Washington State are a significant public health problem with approximately 600 people killed by guns each year over the past decade, and in 2010 more people in Washington State died by guns (609) than in traffic accidents (554); and

WHEREAS, since 1994 over 2.1 million firearm purchase applications have been denied because of federal criminal background checks for gun sales through licensed dealers required by the Brady Law, but up to 40% of firearm purchases are between private parties and not subject to criminal background checks; and

WHEREAS, risk for new criminal activity is increased among those with a prior criminal history, inmate surveys have shown that at least 80% of firearms inmates used in crimes were obtained in a private transfer, and more than 40% of homicide offenders and inmates incarcerated for firearm-related offenses were prohibited persons when they acquired their firearms.

WHEREAS, one study (JAMA 2001; 285:1019-1026) found that denial of handgun purchase to people in California who had committed violent misdemeanors was associated with a decrease in risk of arrest for new gun and/or violent crimes.

WHEREAS, fifteen states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws requiring background checks for all firearm purchases or handgun purchases, and Washington state has not; and

WHEREAS, current WSDCC platform supports "comprehensive gun-sale background checks, including criminal, mental health, and domestic violence checks, and waiting periods, applicable to gun shows and other transactions; mandatory registration and licensing; required safe gun storage; safety training for all gun owners; a limit on volume buys of firearms by an individual; and a total ban on assault weapons and oversized ammunition magazines;" and

WHEREAS, initiative 594 is an initiative to the Washington State legislature that would apply background-check requirements currently used for gun sales by licensed dealers to all gun sales and transfers, with specific exceptions, and require the checks be conducted through licensed dealers, and for the foreseeable future is the only realistic path to enact this policy in Washington State; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the 36th District Democrats call on Washington State Registered Voters to sign Initiative 594, which would apply criminal background-check requirements to all gun sales and transfers in Washington State, with specific exceptions.