ANALYSIS BY THE LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

Proposition 63
Firearms. Ammunition Sales. Initiative Statute.

BACKGROUND

Restrictions on Firearm and Ammunition Possession

Under federal and state law, certain individuals are not allowed to have firearms. These "prohibited persons" include individuals (1) convicted of felonies and some misdemeanors (such as assault or battery), (2) found by a court to be a danger to themselves or others due to mental illness, and (3) with a restraining order against them. In California, individuals who are not allowed to have firearms are also not allowed to have ammunition.

Regulation of Firearm Sales

Both federal and state law include various regulations related to firearm sales, including the licensing of firearm dealers. Such regulations include:

- ***Background Checks.*** Under federal law, firearm dealers must request background checks of individuals seeking to buy firearms from the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS). The NICS searches a number of federal databases to ensure that the buyer is not a prohibited person. As allowed by federal law, California processes all background check requests from firearm dealers in the state directly by using NICS and various state databases.

- ***Removal of Firearms From Prohibited Persons.*** The California Department of Justice (DOJ) maintains a database of individuals who have legally bought or registered a firearm with the state. DOJ agents use this information to remove firearms from individuals who are no longer allowed to have firearms.

- ***Other Regulations.*** Other state regulations related to firearms include: limits on the type of firearms that can be bought, a ten-day waiting period before a dealer may give a firearm to a buyer, and requirements for recording and reporting firearm sales.

Fees charged to firearm dealers and buyers generally offset the state's costs to regulate firearm sales.

Regulation of Ammunition Sales

Prior to this year, the state did not regulate ammunition sales in the same manner as firearms. In July 2016, the state enacted legislation to increase the regulation of ammunition sales. Such regulations include:

- ***Licenses to Sell Ammunition.*** Beginning January 2018, individuals and businesses will be required to obtain a one-year license from DOJ to sell ammunition. Certain individuals and businesses would not be required to obtain a license, such as licensed hunters selling less than 50 rounds of ammunition per month to another licensed hunter while on a hunting trip. In order to obtain a license, ammunition dealers will need to demonstrate that they are not prohibited persons. In addition, certain entities will be able to automatically receive an ammunition license, such as firearm dealers licensed by both the state and federal government and firearm wholesalers. A vendor who fails to comply with ammunition sale requirements three times would have their ammunition dealer's license permanently revoked. DOJ could charge a fee to individuals and businesses seeking a license to sell ammunition to support its administrative and enforcement costs.

- ***DOJ Approval to Buy Ammunition.*** Beginning July 2019, ammunition dealers will be required to check with DOJ at the time of purchase that individuals seeking to buy ammunition are not prohibited persons. This requirement would not apply to some individuals, such as persons permitted to carry concealed weapons. In addition, ammunition dealers will generally be required to collect and report information—such as the date of the sale, the buyers' identification information, and the type of ammunition purchased—to DOJ for storage in a database for two years. Failure to comply with these requirements is a misdemeanor (punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment in county jail). DOJ could generally charge an individual seeking to purchase ammunition a fee of up to $1 per transaction to support its administrative and enforcement costs. DOJ could adjust this fee cap annually for inflation.

- ***Other Regulations.*** Beginning January 2018, state law generally will require that most ammunition sales (including Internet and out-of-state sales) take place through a licensed ammunition dealer. In addition, beginning July 2019, most California residents will be prohibited from bringing ammunition into the state without first having the ammunition delivered to a licensed ammunition dealer. Failure to comply with these requirements is a misdemeanor.

Status of Recent Legislation

As discussed above, the state recently enacted legislation to increase the regulation of ammunition sales. The state also recently enacted legislation to further limit the ownership of large-capacity magazines and to create a penalty for filing a false lost or stolen firearm report to

law enforcement. These laws will take effect unless they are placed before the voters as referenda. If that occurs, voters will determine whether the laws take effect.

PROPOSAL

Proposition 63 (1) changes state regulation of ammunition sales, (2) creates a new court process to ensure the removal of firearms from prohibited persons after they are convicted of a felony or certain misdemeanors, and (3) implements various other provisions. Additionally, Proposition 63 states that the Legislature can change its provisions if such changes are "consistent with and further the intent" of the measure. Such changes can only be made if 55 percent of the members of each house of the Legislature passes them and the bill is enacted into law.

Changes to State Regulation of Ammunition Sales

Proposition 63 includes various regulations related to the sale of ammunition. Some of the regulations would replace existing law with similar provisions. However, other regulations proposed by Proposition 63 are different, as discussed below.

Requirements to Buy Ammunition. Proposition 63 includes various requirements for individuals seeking to buy ammunition and for DOJ to regulate such purchases. Specifically, the measure:

- Requires individuals to obtain a four-year permit from DOJ to buy ammunition and for ammunition dealers to check with DOJ that individuals buying ammunition have such permits.
- Requires DOJ to revoke permits from individuals who become prohibited.

- Allows DOJ to charge each person applying for a four-year permit a fee of up to $50 to support its various administrative and enforcement costs related to ammunition sales.

The state, however, enacted legislation in July 2016 to replace the above provisions with alternative ones if Proposition 63 is approved by the voters. (This legislation was enacted pursuant to the provision of Proposition 63 allowing for changes that are "consistent with and further the intent" of the proposition, as described earlier.) Specifically, under the legislation: (1) ammunition dealers would be required to check with DOJ that individuals seeking to buy ammunition are not prohibited persons at the time of purchase and (2) DOJ could generally charge such individuals up to $1 per transaction. These provisions are similar to current law. Fewer individuals, however, would be exempt from this check than under current law. For example, individuals permitted to carry concealed weapons would be subject to this check.

Licenses to Sell Ammunition. Similar to current law, Proposition 63 requires individuals and businesses to obtain a one-year license from DOJ to sell ammunition. However, the measure changes the types of individuals and businesses that would be exempt from obtaining a license. For example, the measure generally exempts individuals and businesses that sell a small number of rounds of ammunition from the requirement to get a license. The measure also makes various changes in the penalties for failure to follow ammunition sale requirements. For example, it establishes a new criminal penalty—specifically, a misdemeanor—for failing to follow vendor licensing requirements.

Other Ammunition Requirements. This measure prohibits most California residents from bringing ammunition into the state without first having the ammunition delivered to a licensed

ammunition dealer beginning in January 2018—a year and a half earlier than under current law. Additionally, failure to comply with this requirement would change from a misdemeanor to an infraction (punishable by a fine) for the first offense and either an infraction or a misdemeanor for any additional offense. The measure also requires DOJ to store certain ammunition sales information in a database indefinitely, rather than for two years.

Creates New Court Process for Removal of Firearms

This measure creates a new court process to ensure that individuals convicted of offenses that prohibit them from owning firearms do not continue to have them. Beginning in 2018, the measure requires courts to inform offenders upon conviction that they must (1) turn over their firearms to local law enforcement, (2) sell the firearms to a licensed firearm dealer, or (3) give the firearms to a licensed firearm dealer for storage. The measure also requires courts to assign probation officers to report on what offenders have done with their firearms. If the court finds that there is probable cause that an offender still has firearms, it must order that the firearms be removed. Finally, local governments or state agencies could charge a fee to reimburse them for certain costs in implementing the measure (such as those related to the removal or storage of firearms).

Implements Other Provisions

Reporting Requirements. The measure includes a number of reporting requirements related to firearms and ammunition. For example, the measure requires that ammunition dealers report the loss or theft of ammunition within 48 hours. It also requires that most individuals report the loss or theft of firearms within five days to local law enforcement. An individual who does not make such a report within five days would be guilty of an infraction for the first two violations. Additional violations would be a misdemeanor. This measure also reduces the penalty for an

individual who knowingly submits a false report to local law enforcement from a misdemeanor to an infraction and eliminates the prohibition from owning firearms for ten years for such an individual. This measure also requires DOJ to submit the name, date of birth, and physical description of any newly prohibited person to NICS.

Large Capacity Magazines. Since 2000, state law has generally banned individuals from obtaining large capacity magazines (defined as those holding more than ten rounds of ammunition). The law, however, allowed individuals who had large capacity magazines before 2000 to keep them for their own use. Beginning July 2017, recently enacted law will prohibit most of these individuals from possessing these magazines. Individuals who do not comply are guilty of an infraction. However, there are various individuals who will be exempt from this requirement—such as an individual who owns a firearm (obtained before 2000) that can only be used with a large capacity magazine. Proposition 63 eliminates several of these exemptions, as well as increases the maximum penalty for possessing large capacity magazines. Specifically, individuals who possess such magazines after July 2017 would be guilty of an infraction or a misdemeanor.

Penalty for Theft of Firearms. Under current state law, the penalty for theft of firearms worth $950 or less is generally a misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in county jail. Under this measure, such a crime would be a felony and could be punishable by up to three years in state prison. Additionally, individuals previously convicted of a misdemeanor for the theft of a firearm would be prohibited from owning firearms for ten years. Currently, there is no such prohibition for a misdemeanor conviction for theft of firearms.

FISCAL EFFECTS

Increased Court and Law Enforcement Costs. The new court process for removing firearms from prohibited persons after they are convicted would result in increased workload for the state and local governments. For example, state courts and county probation departments would have some increased workload to determine whether prohibited persons have firearms and whether they have surrendered them. In addition, state and local law enforcement would have new workload related to removing firearms from offenders who fail to surrender them as part of the new court process. They could also have increased costs related to the storage or return of firearms. Some of the increased law enforcement costs related to the removal, storage, or return of firearms would be offset to the extent that local governments and state agencies charge and collect fees for these activities, as allowed by this measure. The total magnitude of these state and local costs **could be in the tens of millions of dollars annually**. Actual costs would depend on how this measure was implemented.

Potential Increased State Regulatory Costs. On balance, the measure's changes to the regulation of ammunition sales could increase state costs. For example, more individuals or businesses would likely be subject to state ammunition requirements under the measure. The actual fiscal effect of the changes would depend on how they are implemented and how individuals respond to them. We estimate that the potential increase in state costs would not likely exceed the millions of dollars annually. These costs would likely be offset by the various fees authorized by the measure and existing state law.

Potential Net Increased Correctional Costs. This measure makes various changes to penalties related to firearms and ammunition. While some changes reduce penalties for certain

offenses, other changes increase penalties for certain offenses. On net, these changes could result in increased correctional costs to state and local governments, such as to house individuals in prison and jail. The magnitude of such costs would depend primarily on the number of violations and how the measure is enforced. The potential net increase in correctional costs would **likely not exceed the low millions of dollars annually**.

SUBJECT TO COURT ORDERED CHANGES