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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

Pa. Senate approves bill to limit gun access in domestic violence cases

PA HOUSE BILL 2060

PA State Senators overwhelmingly approved a measure that would tighten gun access for people convicted of some domestic violence crimes -- effectively ensuring it will become law and marking the first time in years that legislators passed new restrictions on gun possession.

The bill, which also applies to people covered under final protection-from-abuse orders, requires people it covers to surrender their guns within 24 hours of a court ruling in their cases. Governor Wolf promised to swiftly sign the bill, calling it "commonsense and urgently needed reform."

"We know that too many families are being torn apart by domestic violence and too many domestic abusers use firearms to kill, injure, and terrorize their victims," the governor said in a statement. "The reforms passed today are long overdue and will make important strides to protect victims and reduce violence."

The bill applies to two sets of people in slightly different ways: It narrows the window in which people convicted of

misdeemeanor domestic violence crimes — such as assault or terroristic threats — have to surrender their firearms. People with those convictions currently have 60 days to hand over their guns. This bill would now give those people 24 hours to do so.

The bill also makes it mandatory for people who are subject to "final" protection-from-abuse orders to surrender their guns as well. Current law leaves that up to a judge's discretion. A "final" PFA — which typically lasts for a maximum of three years — can only be granted by a judge, usually after a hearing.

In both cases, the bill also closes loopholes in the law that allows people to surrender their guns to family members or friends. The bill now requires them to surrender guns to law enforcement, a dealer, or their attorney.

The bill also passed by a wide margin in the PA House, is likely to head to Governor Wolf for his signature soon. It would become law approximately six months after he signs it.

All PA Senators, both Democrat and Republican, voted in favor of this bill with the exception of the five below listed Republicans, who opposed the bill.



BARTOLOTTA, EICHELBERGER, HUTCHINSON, VOGEL & WARD