

Waiting Periods Would NOT Have Prevented Lewiston

Proponents of gun control are pushing an antiquated proposal to institute a 3-day waiting period between the purchase and final transfer of a firearm.

What is a waiting period?

Waiting periods are arbitrary impositions with no effect on crime or suicide, introduce no additional investigative avenues, and only burden law-abiding gun owners without changing how or when criminals obtain firearms.

MYTH: Waiting periods allow for more in-depth background checks.

FACT: NO, waiting periods do NOT change the background check process; no additional investigative measures are taken no matter how long of a waiting period is imposed. The FBI still runs the EXACT SAME background check that they run now, without a waiting period. Most background checks are resolved instantly, but investigations can currently last up to 90 days.

MYTH: Waiting periods reduce suicides, homicides, and mass shootings.

FACT: There is NO evidence that waiting periods reduce suicides, homicides, or mass shootings. No studies that identify causal effects have been identified by any of the independent literature reviews conducted since 2004.

The average time-to-crime for firearms traced by the BATFE in 2018 was nearly 9 years¹, so the idea that guns are often used in crimes of passion or impulsive actions right after purchase is NOT supported by anything other than anecdotal evidence.

Only law-abiding individuals will be impacted by waiting periods. Criminals get firearms from illegal sources such as straw purchases, on the black market, or theft. They don't buy their guns at gun shops.²

MYTH: We need more gun laws.

FACT: There are already too few prosecutions of prohibited persons who attempt to buy a firearm from a dealer. Out of 112,090 total federal denials in 2017, there were only 12 prosecutions.

MYTH: Waiting periods are designed to reduce suicide.

FACT: NO. The waiting period mandated by the Brady Act of 1993 was only in effect until the National Instant Check System came online in 1998.

Not to mention, **TWO THIRDS of gun owners own more than one firearm.**³ **A waiting period could not possibly affect those purchasing an additional firearm.** First-time buyers seeking a firearm for self-defense would be affected by a waiting period that limits their ability to safeguard themselves and their loved ones.

There is absolutely NO scientific evidence that waiting periods affect suicide, homicide, or mass shootings.⁴

CONCLUSION: A waiting period would not have stopped the tragedy in Lewiston, and it's an arbitrary measure that is not based in reality. It does nothing to improve the background check system, assess the mental health of the purchaser, or prevent firearms from getting into the hands of criminals. In fact, it imposes a burden on law-abiding individuals who want to obtain a firearm for personal protection.

Months before the tragedy in Lewiston, Robert Card was showing signs of paranoia. On May 3, 2023, a Citizen Assist complaint originating from a local public school address was logged with the Sagadahoc County Sheriff's Office.

In July 2023, Card was admitted to a mental health facility in New York and spent 14 days in that hospital. It is well-documented that Card acted violently and even assaulted a fellow soldier.

In September 2023, weeks before the shooting, police received a request from the Maine National Guard to do a welfare check on Robert Card.

The reality of this tragedy is that there were signs for a year leading up to the shooting that Card was violent. He made threats and acted violently. Prior to the shooting, Card allegedly committed several serious crimes but he was not charged. Why not? Repeatedly, Card showed serious signs of danger, and his behavior was largely ignored.

A reasonable person can conclude: a 72-hour waiting period would not have prevented this tragedy from occurring, especially since Robert Card lawfully owned firearms for years.

Instead, a 72-hour waiting period would prevent every law-abiding individual who wants to purchase a firearm for self-protection from obtaining one.

The ability to protect yourself and your loved ones has never been more important. It is well documented that police response times are rising across the country, and in Maine, for a variety of factors.

If a violent intruder breaks into a home, a 72-hour waiting period could be the difference between life and death.

¹ Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. "Firearms Trace Data – 2018: Time-to-Crime; Firearms Recovered and Traced in the United States and Territories." 2018.

² U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, "Source and Use of Firearms Involved in Crimes: Survey of Prison Inmates, 2016." 2019. p7.

³ Pew Research Center. "America's Complex Relationship with Guns." June 2017. Uses data from national surveys of adults in March and April 2017.

⁴ https://www.nraila.org/get-the-facts/waiting-periods/#_edn12