

Concerns of North Carolina sheriffs regarding the section of House Bill 937, Amend Various Firearms Laws which was added in the Senate which would repeal the pistol purchase permit law.

1 --- North Carolina sheriffs recognize and support Amendment II of the Constitution which provides that “the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.”

2 --- House Bill 937, Amend Various Firearms Laws, as originally passed by the House is supported by the Association.

3 --- The bill was rewritten by the Senate Judiciary I Committee to add several provisions, including provisions that would: (a) make gun permit records confidential; and (b) repeal the law requiring pistol purchase permits.

4 --- The Association supports the provision which would make records of concealed handgun permits and pistol purchase permits (i.e. gun permits) confidential.

5 --- In previous legislative sessions, the Association has opposed efforts to repeal or weaken the law requiring pistol purchase permits, and the Association continues to oppose that provision now contained in HB 937.

6 --- A background check is required by both federal law and our state’s pistol purchase permit law. The sheriff has access to significantly more information about the applicant’s criminal record, pending criminal charges, mental health record, and other relevant data than is contained in the federal NICS system. To protect the citizens of North Carolina, all of the information required by federal law that is available to the sheriff should be considered when a decision is made about whether or not it is appropriate for a person to be authorized to purchase a handgun.

7 --- The Association urges the House to “not concur” with the Senate version of HB 937 so that a conference committee can be appointed to address this one provision in the bill.

8 --- Various criticisms have been made about certain shortcomings in the current pistol purchase permit law. North Carolina sheriffs acknowledge that the current law needs improvement and are committed to working with legislative leaders to fix the flaws in the current law.

9 --- Specifically, the Association suggests amending HB 937 by deleting the provision that would repeal the pistol purchase permit law, and inserting a provision requiring a study to analyze and propose changes to fix the shortcomings of the current pistol purchase permit law. The study should be conducted by the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Justice and Public Safety, and should involve input from all interested parties. A final report should be submitted in time for the proposed changes to be enacted into law during the 2014 Session of the General Assembly. The NC Sheriffs’ Association is committed to working with the JPS Oversight Committee to draft legislation that will fix the flaws in the current pistol purchase permit law.