

The Liberal Progressive Guide to Understanding

Colorado Senate Bill 25-003

“Semiautomatic Firearms & Rapid-Fire Devices”

# OVERVIEW

The purpose of this guide is to offer a clear, values-driven liberal progressive perspective on Colorado Senate Bill 25-003 (“Semiautomatic Firearms & Rapid-Fire Devices”)<sup>1</sup>. In an era where civil liberties are under threat and systemic inequities persist, it is critical for progressives to scrutinize policies that risk expanding state power, criminalization, and billionaire influence.

The resurgence of authoritarianism, exemplified by Donald Trump’s reelection, demands that liberals and progressives reclaim their role in shaping debates about gun rights. For too long, gun policy has been ceded to partisan reflexes, with lawmakers on both sides prioritizing special interests over equitable, evidence-based solutions. Corporate and billionaire-funded lobbying groups often drive state-level gun legislation, resulting in laws that disproportionately harm marginalized communities while failing to address root causes of violence.

We reject the assumption that “gun control” is inherently progressive. Senate Bill 25-003, for instance, relies on punitive enforcement, expands mass incarceration, and exempts law enforcement from its restrictions. True progress requires policies that confront systemic drivers of harm (e.g., poverty, lack of mental healthcare, and over-policing) without eroding individual rights or empowering carceral systems.

This guide exists to empower liberal progressive voters with independent analysis, free from partisan influence or donor influence. We intentionally withhold authorship to ensure focus remains on substance over personality and to deny politicians of any party the opportunity to weaponize partisan tribalism against this critique. Our goal is not to oppose reform, but to demand better: legislation that aligns with progressive values of equity, accountability, and community-led change while maintaining civil liberties.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/sb25-003>

## OTHER RESOURCES

We acknowledge that the information contained in this guide may be incomplete or imperfect. We strongly encourage readers to obtain and review other liberal progressive sources of information and perspectives on gun control legislation. Readers may find the following groups and forums useful in forming their independent opinion on SB25-003 and other gun control legislation.

- **The Liberal Gun Club** (<https://theliberalgunclub.com/>): The mission of The Liberal Gun Club is to provide a pro-Second Amendment voice for left-of-center gun owners in the national conversations on firearms.
- **Operation Blazing Sword** (<https://www.blazingsword.org/>): Operation Blazing Sword is a grass-roots organization dedicated to helping everyone, but especially queer people, become responsible firearm owners.
- **The Pink Pistols** (<https://www.pinkpistols.org/>): The Pink Pistols is dedicated to the legal, safe, and responsible use of firearms for self-defense of the sexual-minority community.
- **Liberal Gun Owners Subreddit** (<https://www.reddit.com/r/liberalgunowners/>): The Liberal Gun Owners Subreddit is dedicated to gun-ownership through a pro-gun liberal / leftist lens.
- **Socialist Rifle Association** (<https://socialistra.org/>): The Socialist Rifle Association's mission is to uphold the right of the working class to keep and bear arms and maintain the skills necessary for self and community defense.

# BASIC FACTS

Senate Bill 25-003 was introduced on 1/8/2025 as new legislation for the 2025 Regular Session of the Colorado General Assembly. The Bill's primary sponsors are:

- Senator Tom Sullivan (Democrat, District 27)
- Senator Julie Gonzales (Democrat, District 34)
- Representative Andrew Boesenecker (Democrat, District 53)
- Representative Meg Froelich (Democrat, District 3)

The bill has been assigned to the State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee chaired by Senator Mike Weissman (Democrat, District 28). Bill sponsor Senator Tom Sullivan is the Vice Chair of the State, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee. Other committee members include Senator Matt Ball (Democrat, District 31), Senator Rod Pelton (Republican, District 35), and Senator Byron Pelton (Republican, District 1).

The authorship of Senate Bill 25-003 is unclear. One must assume that the bill sponsors had a role in authoring the bill. However, to date, no evidence has been provided that the bill sponsors are the primary authors of the bill. The bill's detractors have implied that special interests groups including those funded by billionaire Michael Bloomberg participate in the authoring of the bill. However, to date, these claims have neither been denied nor substantiated. The bill appears to be unique among state-level gun control legislation both in language and scope. Thus, it does not appear that the bill represents a "copy and paste" legislation from gun control legislation proposed in other states.

# BASIC LEGAL ANALYSIS

The following represents a high-level analysis of the legal implications of the language found in SB25-003 as of January 2, 2025. Note that proposed bills exist in draft form and are subject to revision as the bill passes through the legislative process. We encourage readers to review the latest version of the bill found on the [Colorado General Assembly website](#).

## **Summary of Colorado Senate Bill 25-003: Statutory Claims and Legal Implications**

### 1. Prohibited Firearms:

A) Bans the manufacture, distribution, transfer, sale, or purchase of "specified semiautomatic firearms," defined as:

- Semiautomatic rifles or shotguns with a detachable magazine.
- Gas-operated semiautomatic handguns with a detachable magazine.

B) Exceptions allow transfers to heirs, out-of-state residents, or federally licensed dealers.

### 2. Exemptions:

A) Law enforcement, military personnel, corrections staff, and certain institutions (e.g., museums, forensic labs) are exempt.

### 3. Penalties:

A) First offense: Class 2 misdemeanor (up to 120 days jail, fines).

B) Subsequent offenses: Class 6 felony (up to 18 months prison, larger fines).

C) Firearm dealers may lose licenses for violations.

D) Felony convictions result in permanent firearm possession bans; misdemeanors trigger a 5-year ban.

### 4. Rapid-Fire Devices:

A) Defines "rapid-fire devices" as tools that increase a semiautomatic firearm's rate of fire.

B) Classifies these devices as "dangerous weapons," making possession illegal.

### 5. Effective Date:

A) Takes effect September 1, 2025. Applies only to offenses committed on or after that date.

# ADDITIONAL LEGAL COMMENTARY

The following provides additional analysis of the bill's language to aid the readers in interpretation of the bill's legal implications. This analysis represents the opinions of the authors and the reader is invited to read the bill's latest contents to form their own opinion of this analysis.

- **Spurious “magazine ban” claim:** This bill is being touted by bill sponsors as a “magazine ban” and an effort to close “loopholes” in previous magazine ban legislation. This claim of a “magazine ban” appears to be suspect at best. The bill, as written, constitutes a de facto ban on the majority of weapons used commonly today for hunting and self defense.
- **Restrictive legacy ownership:** The language banning the sale, transfer, and manufacture of the majority of semi-automatic rifles and shotguns offers a highly restrictive legacy clause for current owners of these weapons. It would be near impossible for citizens of Colorado to replace lost, stolen, damaged, or confiscated weapons. These restrictions may disproportionately harm LGBTQ+, BIPOC, and working-class groups who already struggle to find safety and inclusion in the firearms community.
- **Contradictions with *NYSRPA v. Bruen*:** The language of this bill is likely directly at odds with the Supreme Court's 2022 *Bruen* decision because it enacts broad restrictions on semiautomatic firearms based on features such as detachable magazines and gas-operated mechanisms. The *Bruen* decision emphasizes that firearm regulations must be consistent with the historical tradition of firearm regulation in the United States. A sweeping ban on an entire class of firearms that are commonly used by law-abiding citizens for lawful purposes (such as self-defense) would likely be deemed unconstitutional under *Bruen*, as it departs from historical practices and fails to meet the required standard of scrutiny. Passing a bill that will inevitably face judicial invalidation wastes state resources that could otherwise be spent on other priorities, such as healthcare and affordable housing.

# SB25-003 PERPETUATES DISPROPORTIONATE HARM AND SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

- **The emphasis on criminalization and new criminal penalties reinforces the carceral state and will disproportionately impact communities of color, continuing patterns of systemic racism in our criminal justice system.** The bill imposes class II misdemeanor and felony penalties for non-violent offenses (e.g., transferring a firearm to an heir). Creating felony charges for second offenses will lead to more people losing voting rights and facing barriers to employment and housing, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization.
- **The bill empowers law enforcement with more tools for selective enforcement.** Historically, restrictive firearm laws have been unevenly enforced, often targeting Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color. This bill could perpetuate patterns of over-policing and criminalization in these communities under the guise of public safety.
- **The bill's explicit exemptions for law enforcement and military personnel further entrenches state power and creates a dangerous two-tier system:** police maintain access to powerful weapons while communities are disarmed. This power imbalance is particularly concerning given the ongoing militarization of police and history of state violence against marginalized communities. The exemptions create an even wider gulf between the state's capacity for violence and communities' ability to resist oppression.
- **The bill ensures that the state, which can become right-wing as easily as it became left-leaning, will have a monopoly on violence.** While the current makeup of the Colorado legislature is predominantly liberal and progressive, it is not guaranteed to remain that way. As recent elections demonstrate, the country is poised to vote in politicians who embrace fascism, christian nationalism, and other right-wing ideologies. These far-right groups may eventually gain a majority in Colorado, and this bill, if passed, will have been successful in preventing LGBTQ+, minority, working-class, and other marginalized communities from obtaining the necessary tools for self defense from authoritarian regimes.

# SB25-003 FAILS TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES OF GUN VIOLENCE

- **The bill ignores the fact that many root causes of violence are well-understood and proposes a heavy-handed ban to treat symptoms of a social disease rather than addressing root causes.** Legislation addressing community-based violence intervention programs, mental health services and crisis response team, youth employment and education programs, affordable housing initiatives, poverty reduction programs, and healthcare access would better serve gun violence harm reduction than blanket gun bans.
- **The bill risks diverting political capital and funding from evidence-based solutions like community violence intervention programs, affordable housing, and education.** Even if state politicians claim that they are introducing additional legislation to address root causes of gun violence, this bill will ultimately be harmful to those efforts. The Colorado legislative session lasts only 120 days, and the severely polarizing nature of this bill is certain to distract from efforts to pass legislation that would better serve other liberal progressive goals. Should this bill pass, it will most certainly be tied up in the courts and may ultimately be struck down under the auspices of the *Bruen* decision. The state of Colorado, which is already facing a budget deficit, will have to allocate millions of dollars in state funding to fight these lawsuits. This money would be better spent on social programs and efforts to improve affordable housing in Colorado.
- **This bill does not appear to be grounded in clear, data-driven evidence that banning specific types of semiautomatic firearms will significantly reduce gun violence.** Effective gun control measures should rely on rigorous studies and empirical support. Further, the bill sponsors should demonstrate that they have engaged with and listened to members of marginalized communities most affected by gun violence and threats of personal violence. This bill appears to represent a technocratic, top-down approach to imposing gun right restrictions without input from marginalized communities. In fact, the first vote for this bill in committee will be decided primarily by socially elite, cis, white men.

## SB25-003 IS ABLEIST

- **The proposed ban on a broad range of semi-automatic firearms with detachable magazines creates significant barriers for individuals with disabilities and the elderly, who often rely on these firearms for self-defense, hunting, and sport shooting.** By prioritizing sweeping restrictions over inclusive policy design, the bill risks disproportionately harming two vulnerable populations in society.
- **The bill would ban semi-automatic firearms with detachable magazines that are uniquely suited to the physical needs of the disabled and elderly.** The ergonomics, minimal recoil, and ease of operation of modern semi-automatic weapons address many of the limitations of manual-operation or fixed magazine firearms. Detachable magazines allow for quick and simple reloading, which is critical for people with limited hand strength or dexterity. By contrast, fixed magazines or manually fed systems often require fine motor skills or additional tools, making them inaccessible to many.
- **Statistical evidence shows that disabled individuals are more likely to face violent victimization.** According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, individuals with disabilities are significantly more likely to experience assault and other crimes than non-disabled individuals. By banning semiautomatic firearms with detachable magazines, the bill effectively denies disabled individuals an equal opportunity to defend themselves in life-threatening situations, further marginalizing an already vulnerable group.
- **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates that policies should not disproportionately disadvantage disabled individuals.** This bill risks being in conflict with the ADA because its practical effect disproportionately burdens disabled individuals, creating an accessibility barrier. The bill does not provide accommodations or exceptions for individuals who rely on detachable-magazine firearms due to their disabilities, thereby failing to meet standards of inclusivity.

# TAKING ACTION

If you believe that SB25-003 represents a potential threat to your individual rights and ideals as a liberal progressive, we encourage you to reach out to state representatives to voice your concerns. We believe it is important for liberal progressives to reclaim their voice in the gun legislation process. We believe it is important to let liberal and progressive politicians, many of whom who receive funding from billionaire special interests on this issue, know that they can no longer rely on partisan reflexes and assume we will fall in line. The recent elections highlight the need for us to establish our own voice and act in our own interests, and the interests of those who have been marginalized.

You can act by calling and writing the relevant politicians. We provide the contact information for the primary bill sponsors below. We also provide contact information for Governor Jared Polis' office. The Governor's office can provide feedback to the bill sponsors and alter the course of the bill through the legislative process, and the Governor ultimately has veto power over the bill should it arrive on his desk. Governor Polis, an openly gay Governor, purports to be champion of liberal and progressive values. Let him know that many in liberal and progressive communities are waking up to the reality of defending ourselves and those who cannot defend themselves against rising authoritarianism.

- Senator Tom Sullivan's office: E-mail ([tom.sullivan.senate@coleg.gov](mailto:tom.sullivan.senate@coleg.gov)), Phone (303-866-4873)
- Senator Julie Gonzales' office: E-mail ([julie.gonzales.senate@coleg.gov](mailto:julie.gonzales.senate@coleg.gov)), Phone (303-866-4862)
- Representative Andrew Boesenecker's office: E-mail ([andrew.boesenecker.house@coleg.gov](mailto:andrew.boesenecker.house@coleg.gov)), Phone (303-866-2917)
- Representative Meg Froelich's office: E-mail ([meg.froelich.house@coleg.gov](mailto:meg.froelich.house@coleg.gov)), Phone (303-866-2921)
- Governor Polis' office: E-mail ([governorpolis@state.co.us](mailto:governorpolis@state.co.us) & [gov\\_constituentservices@state.co.us](mailto:gov_constituentservices@state.co.us)), Phone (303-866-2885)