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## OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5043 (as amended by House "A")\*

### **AN ACT CONCERNING CONVERTIBLE PISTOLS AND UNFINISHED FRAMES OR UNFINISHED LOWER RECEIVERS.**

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

#### SUMMARY

#### §§ 1–4 — CONVERTIBLE PISTOLS AND RATE OF FIRE ENHANCEMENTS

*Generally makes it a class D felony to knowingly import into Connecticut or knowingly advertise, sell, offer, or expose for sale any convertible pistol manufactured on or after October 1, 2026; defines terms associated with the bill's convertible pistols-related provisions; expands "rate of fire enhancement" to include a pistol converter or certain other devices, parts, or accessories that generally increase the pistol's rate of fire, and subjects them to existing law's penalty for rate of fire enhancement-related violations; specifies that under some circumstances, convertible pistols are considered to be machine guns*

#### §§ 5–9 — UNFINISHED FRAME OR UNFINISHED LOWER RECEIVER

*Clarifies that "unfinished frame or lower receiver" refers to "unfinished frame or unfinished lower receiver," redefines the term, and makes corresponding changes throughout; prohibits anyone without a local dealer permit from (1) advertising, selling, or delivering them, (2) offering or exposing them for sale or delivery, or (3) possessing them with the intent to deliver them or sell them at retail*

#### §§ 10 & 11 — VOLUNTARY DELIVERY OR SURRENDER OF FIREARMS OR AMMUNITION TO POLICE

*Explicitly allows anyone to deliver or surrender any firearm or ammunition they possess to DESPP or a local police department who must then hold them for at least 14 days, up to two years; establishes a process for returning these items to transferors and destroying those that are not returned*

#### § 12 — PISTOL PERMIT FEE REQUIRED REFUND

*Requires local handgun permitting authorities to refund \$70 to applicants if the authority does not act within statutorily established timeframes*

## **SUMMARY**

This bill makes various changes to firearms-related laws, including those related to convertible pistols, rate of fire enhancements, unfinished frames or unfinished lower receivers, the voluntary delivery

or surrender of firearms or ammunition to police, and pistol permit fee refunds. It also makes conforming changes. A section-by-section analysis appears below.

\*House Amendment "A" (1) makes the underlying bill's prohibition on convertible pistol sales and related actions a class D felony only if the person or entity knowingly violates it (§ 3); (2) specifically excludes certain semiautomatic pistols with a cruciform trigger bar from the underlying bill's definition of "convertible pistols" (§ 1); (3) specifies that "common household tools" as defined in the underlying bill includes knives (§ 1); (4) considers any device, component, part, combination of parts, attachment, or accessory that forcibly resets the firearm's trigger a rate of fire enhancement (§ 2); and (5) adds the provisions on (a) the voluntary delivery or surrender of firearms or ammunition to police and (b) pistol permit fee refunds (§§ 10-12).

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, unless stated otherwise below.

## **§§ 1–4 — CONVERTIBLE PISTOLS AND RATE OF FIRE ENHANCEMENTS**

*Generally makes it a class D felony to knowingly import into Connecticut or knowingly advertise, sell, offer, or expose for sale any convertible pistol manufactured on or after October 1, 2026; defines terms associated with the bill's convertible pistols-related provisions; expands "rate of fire enhancement" to include a pistol converter or certain other devices, parts, or accessories that generally increase the pistol's rate of fire, and subjects them to existing law's penalty for rate of fire enhancement-related violations; specifies that under some circumstances, convertible pistols are considered to be machine guns*

### ***Prohibition Related to Certain Convertible Pistols (§ 3)***

This bill generally makes it a class D felony for anyone or any legal entity (firm, partnership, corporation, limited liability company, association, or other similar entity) to knowingly import into Connecticut or knowingly advertise, sell, offer, or expose for sale any convertible pistol manufactured on or after October 1, 2026. A class D felony is punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine up to \$5,000, or both. The bill does not apply this provision to retail sale or other lawful transfer of a convertible pistol by someone who is not a licensed gun dealer to another person who is not a licensed gun dealer.

Under the bill, a “convertible pistol” is any semiautomatic pistol with a cruciform trigger bar (see below) that can be readily altered by hand or with a common household tool (such as a knife, screwdriver, wrench, hacksaw, crowbar, electric drill, rotary tool, hammer, chisel, file, or pliers) so that the pistol can be readily converted into a machine gun by installing or attaching a pistol converter. It also specifies certain things that are not considered convertible pistols under the bill (see below).

### ***Convertible Pistols-Related Definitions (§ 1)***

The bill defines terms associated with its convertible pistols-related provisions, including adding certain convertible pistols to the definition of “machine guns” for the purpose of laws specific to offenses against public peace and safety.

***Machine Gun.*** The bill expressly states that any convertible pistol that is equipped with a pistol converter is a machine gun. Under existing law, a “machine gun” is (1) any weapon, loaded or unloaded, that shoots, is designed to shoot, or can be readily restored to shoot automatically more than one projectile, without manual reloading, by a single function of the trigger, and (2) any part or combination of parts designed to convert a weapon into a machine gun and any combination of parts from which a machine gun can be assembled if a person possessed or controlled these parts.

***Pistol Converter.*** Under the bill, a “pistol converter” is any device or instrument that, when installed in or attached to the rear of the slide of a semiautomatic pistol, interferes with the trigger mechanism, and in so doing enables the pistol to discharge a number of shots or bullets rapidly or automatically with one continuous pull of the trigger.

***Convertible Pistol.*** The bill specifies that “convertible pistol” does not include any (1) hammer-fired semiautomatic pistol or (2) semiautomatic pistol with a cruciform trigger bar that has a tab or other piece of material molded to the pistol’s frame that shields that bar from interference by a pistol converter unless the tab or other piece of material can be readily removed from the pistol’s frame.

**Cruciform Trigger Bar.** Under the bill, a “cruciform trigger bar” is a component in a semiautomatic pistol that serves as a linkage between the trigger and firing pin and has its sear incorporated in a cross-shaped surface.

**Rate of Fire Enhancement (§ 2)**

The law generally makes it a class D felony for anyone, except a federally licensed firearms manufacturer fulfilling a military contract, to sell, offer to sell, otherwise transfer or offer to transfer, purchase, possess, use, or manufacture a “rate of fire enhancement” (such as a bump stock).

Under current law, “rate of fire enhancement” means any device, component, part, combination of parts, attachment, or accessory that:

1. uses energy from a firearm’s recoil to generate a reciprocating action that causes repeated function of the trigger, such as a bump stock;
2. repeatedly pulls the trigger of a firearm through the use of a crank, lever, or other part, such as a trigger crank; or
3. causes a semiautomatic firearm to fire more than one round per operation of the trigger, where the trigger pull and reset constitute a single operation of the trigger, such as a binary trigger system.

Under the bill, this also includes any device, component, part, combination of parts, attachment, or accessory that forcibly resets the firearm’s trigger using a crank, lever, or other part, such as a forced reset trigger. The bill further expands “rate of fire enhancement” to include (1) a pistol converter or (2) any other device, part, combination of parts, kit, tool, or accessory that is not necessary for the function of the pistol and that, when built into, installed in, or attached to the pistol, increases the rate of fire above the rate at which a person can otherwise fire the firearm. In doing so it subjects anyone who sells, offers to sell, otherwise transfers or offers to transfer, purchases, possesses, uses, or manufactures the bill’s additional rate of fire enhancements to existing

law's penalties described above (generally a class D felony).

***Machine Gun Definition Under the Penal Code (§ 4)***

The bill also explicitly states that for purposes of the penal code in general, "machine gun" includes any convertible pistol that is possessed by an individual who also possesses a pistol converter.

**§§ 5-9 — UNFINISHED FRAME OR UNFINISHED LOWER RECEIVER**

*Clarifies that "unfinished frame or lower receiver" refers to "unfinished frame or unfinished lower receiver," redefines the term, and makes corresponding changes throughout; prohibits anyone without a local dealer permit from (1) advertising, selling, or delivering them, (2) offering or exposing them for sale or delivery, or (3) possessing them with the intent to deliver them or sell them at retail*

Under current law, "unfinished frame or lower receiver" means a blank, casting, or machined body intended to be turned into the frame or lower receiver of a firearm, with additional machining, and which has been formed or machined to the point where most major machining operations have been completed to turn the blank, casting, or machined body into a frame or lower receiver of a firearm, even if the fire-control cavity area of the blank, casting, or machined body is still completely solid and unmachined. Current law also specifies that an "unfinished frame or lower receiver" is not a firearm as defined under federal law.

The bill clarifies that "unfinished frame or lower receiver" refers to an "unfinished frame or unfinished lower receiver" and makes corresponding changes throughout. It also redefines the term to mean a blank, casting, forging, printing, extrusion, machined body, or similar item that (1) has reached a stage in manufacture where it may readily be completed into the frame or receiver of a functional firearm; or (2) is marketed or sold to the public as the frame or receiver of a functional firearm once completed. The bill maintains existing law's general prohibition on purchasing, receiving, selling, delivering, or otherwise transferring them; procedural requirements for doing so if allowed; requirements for unique serial numbers or other identification marks; and penalties for violations.

The bill prohibits individuals or legal entities from advertising, selling, delivering, or offering or exposing for sale or delivery, or

possessing with the intent to sell at retail or deliver, any unfinished frame or unfinished lower receiver in Connecticut without a local dealer permit.

## **§§ 10 & 11 — VOLUNTARY DELIVERY OR SURRENDER OF FIREARMS OR AMMUNITION TO POLICE**

*Explicitly allows anyone to deliver or surrender any firearm or ammunition they possess to DESPP or a local police department, which must then hold them for at least 14 days, up to a maximum of two years; establishes a process for returning these items to transferors and destroying those that are not returned*

The bill explicitly allows anyone to deliver or surrender any firearm or ammunition they possess to the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) or a local police department who must then hold them for at least 14 days, up to a maximum of two years. (In practice, DESPP currently has a form (DPS-293-C) and process by which lawful owners may surrender their firearms or ammunition to the State Police for immediate destruction or for appropriate use within the department.)

The bill requires the departments to exercise due care in receiving and holding delivered or surrendered firearms and ammunition and establishes a process under which (1) the items may be returned to transferors after 14 days and (2) unreturned items must be destroyed after two years.

(The bill's process is in addition to other processes under existing law on the (1) disposition of firearms and ammunition that are delivered or surrendered by people who become ineligible to possess them (CGS § 29-36k) and (2) relinquishment of assault weapons (CGS § 53-202e).)

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026, except the provisions on DESPP giving notice about the bill and creating a return request form are effective upon passage.

### ***Return and Destruction of Delivered or Surrendered Firearms***

Under the bill, anyone who delivers or surrenders a firearm or ammunition they possess to DESPP or a local police department may request its return starting 15 days after and for up to two years. A request must include a completed and signed form the bill requires the

DESPP commissioner to create.

When DESPP or a local police department receives a return request, the department must review the request and make the firearm or ammunition available for retrieval within five days if it confirms the requestor (1) submitted the signed DESPP form, (2) was legally entitled to possess the firearm or ammunition at the time the item was delivered or surrendered, and (3) is not otherwise disqualified from possessing the item.

If a firearm or ammunition has not been collected within two years after it was delivered or surrendered, the bill requires the department holding the item to cause it to be destroyed after giving written notice to the person who delivered or surrendered it. The notice must be made at least 90 days before the date the item will be destroyed.

***DESPP Notice and Return Request Form***

Within 30 days after the bill’s passage, the DESPP commissioner must, within available appropriations, post a written notice on the department’s website about the above provisions on voluntarily delivered or surrendered firearms and ammunition. The notice must include (1) directions on how to request the return of those items and the requirements that requestors must satisfy and (2) that items not collected within two years will be destroyed.

The bill also requires the commissioner, by October 1, 2027, to promulgate and make available on the department’s website a form for requesting the return of firearms and ammunition delivered or surrendered under the bill.

***Background — Related Bill***

HB 5459 (File 254), favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, explicitly allows anyone to relinquish any firearms they own, other than assault weapons, to a police department or DESPP.

**§ 12 — PISTOL PERMIT FEE REQUIRED REFUND**

*Requires local handgun permitting authorities to refund \$70 to applicants if the authority does not act within statutorily established timeframes*

The bill requires local handgun permitting authorities to partially refund the applicant's fees if the authorities do not complete their duties (such as by failing to act on an application) within statutorily established timeframes.

By law, handgun permits are issued under a two-part process, requiring approval from both the local permitting authority and DESPP. The local official investigates an applicant, including through a background check, and issues a temporary state permit; the State Police conduct state and national criminal history record checks on the applicant and issue a five-year state permit.

By law, as part of the handgun permitting process, applicants must pay a \$140 fee and the local permitting authority retains \$70. The bill instead requires the local authority to refund that \$70 to the applicant if it does not complete its duties within certain timeframes. Under the bill, issuing a refund in this way does not discharge the local permitting authority's obligation to complete its duties after the timeframe expires.

Unchanged by the bill, applicants must also pay to cover the cost of an FBI national criminal history records check. As under existing law, once a temporary state permit is approved, the local permitting authority forwards the other \$70 to the DESPP commissioner.

***Background — Local Permitting Authority Duties***

By law, the local permitting authority must inform the applicant whether the permit has been approved or denied within eight weeks after receiving an application. The local permitting authority must also take the applicant's fingerprints or use any other method of positive identification and forward the fingerprints and positive identifying information to the State Police Bureau of Identification within five business days.

Existing law allows the local permitting authority to issue a temporary state permit before a national criminal history check has been

received. Once the national criminal history check has been received by the local permitting authority, the local permitting authority has one week to decide on the permit and notify the applicant. If the results have not been received within eight weeks, the permitting authority must inform the applicant of the delay in writing.

A “local permitting authority” is the chief of police or, where there is no police chief, the municipality’s chief executive officer (CEO) (or the resident state trooper or relevant state police officer designated by the municipality’s CEO).

***Background — Related Bill***

HB 5454 (File 272), favorably reported by the Public Safety and Security Committee, has similar provisions on pistol permit fee partial refunds.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 24 Nay 12 (03/24/2026)