



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Danielle Larson, Senior Financial Manager, Finance Department
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Ordinance—Firearms and Ammunition Tax – October 22, 2019
DATE: October 15, 2019

SUMMARY:

Ordinance amending Tacoma Municipal Code by creating a new Chapter 6A.120, Firearms and Ammunition Tax, imposes a tax on firearms and ammunition to consist of \$25.00 per firearm, \$0.02 per round of ammunition .22 caliber or less, and \$0.05 per round of other ammunition sold at retail to raise revenue for funding programs that promote public safety, prevent gun violence, and help offset the impacts and costs of gun violence in the city.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Victoria Woodards
Council Member Ryan Mello
Council Member Catherine Ushka

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

- Strengthen and support a safe city with healthy residents.
- Encourage and promote an efficient and effective government, which is fiscally sustainable and guided by engaged residents.

BACKGROUND:

According to the Pew Research Center, in the year 2017 (the most recent year for which complete data on gun violence in the United States is available), 39,773 people died from gun-related injuries. Three quarters of all murders and about half of all suicides involved a firearm. Additionally, every year, 600 American women are shot to death by intimate partners, which accounts for half of all women shot to death by others in the United States. Basic research and prevention programs can reduce long-term costs and save lives, but often need funding to get started. Due to successful efforts by the gun lobbyists, funding for research into the causes of gun violence has been blocked at the federal level since 1996.

The City of Tacoma has taxing authority granted by the Washington State Constitution, as authorized by the Washington State Legislature, and as affirmed by the Washington State Supreme Court in *Watson et al v. City of Seattle*, 189 Wn.2d 149 (2017), to raise general revenue for the City and to use that revenue to provide broad-based public benefits for the residents of Tacoma. The City of Seattle has imposed a tax on firearms and ammunition which has been upheld by the Washington State Supreme Court. The tax consists of \$25.00 per firearm sold at retail; \$0.02 per round of ammunition .22 caliber or less; and \$0.05 per round of other ammunition sold at retail. The proposed Ordinance would impose a similar tax on firearms and ammunition. If this ordinance is approved, the City would direct the revenue raised by the proposed tax toward violence prevention programs to offset the impact and cost that gun violence has had on our community.

At the August 27th Study Session, Council Member Mello shared a Council Consideration Request for the forwarding of this ordinance for full City Council consideration. During the discussion, there was a request for staff to provide a matrix of existing funding and services for gun violence prevention and intervention, which was shared at the October 1st Study Session.



ISSUE:

The number of criminal offenses involving firearms has increased 37 percent in Tacoma between 2014 and 2018. Of the 22 homicides that have occurred in Tacoma in 2019, 19 involved firearms. The creation of a sustained revenue source to promote public safety, prevent gun violence, and partly address the financial impacts of gun violence is intended to enhance the perception of public safety in Tacoma and address the rising rate of gun violence in the City. If approved, the proposed tax would go into effect January 1, 2020.

The requested Ordinance would direct the City Manager, within 75 calendar days of the date of this Ordinance, to bring recommendations to the City Council that assist and empower our local communities faced with gun violence, potentially in partnership with other agencies and entities, to help them heal from the damage caused by gun violence in our community, and to develop strategies together to further reduce youth and young adult gun violence. After consultation with partners, the City Manager shall also make recommendations for programming with youth and young adults, ages 18-30, to reduce gun violence with concepts such as community court or restorative justice and gang prevention and gang violence reduction for individuals not in a felony situation, and any other recommendations to reduce gun violence in our community, including state and federal legislative priorities and other measures to be led locally to improve gun safety and ensure that guns do not get into the wrong hands,

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council could choose to modify or not approve the proposed Ordinance imposing a tax on firearms and ammunition to raise revenue for broad-based public benefits for residents of Tacoma related to gun violence to fund programs that promote public safety, prevention of gun violence, and help offset the impacts and cost of gun violence in the city.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council approve the proposed Ordinance that establishes a new Chapter 6A.120 Firearms and Ammunition Tax in the Tacoma Municipal Code effective January 1, 2020, to impose a tax on firearms and ammunitions to consist of \$25.00 per firearm sold at retail, \$0.02 per round of ammunition .22 caliber or less, and \$0.05 per round of other ammunition sold at retail to raise revenue to be directed at youth violence prevention programs to help offset the impact and cost that gun violence has on our community.



FISCAL IMPACT:

EXPENDITURES:

FUND NUMBER & FUND NAME *	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	COST ELEMENT	TOTAL AMOUNT
1185 – NCS Special Revenue	Various	Various	\$30,000
TOTAL			

* General Fund: Include Department

REVENUES:

FUNDING SOURCE	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	COST ELEMENT	TOTAL AMOUNT
1185 – NCS Special Revenue	To Be Determined	To Be Determined	\$30,000
TOTAL			

FISCAL IMPACT TO CURRENT BIENNIAL BUDGET: \$30,000 (estimated)

ARE THE EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES PLANNED AND BUDGETED? No

IF EXPENSE IS NOT BUDGETED, PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW THEY ARE TO BE COVERED.

Staff recommends collecting the revenues in 2020 to monitor revenue projections. Staff will bring forward expense appropriation that support youth violence prevention programs and match available revenues as part of the 2021-2020 biennial budgeting process.