

# Hartford Courant

## EDITORIAL

### Gun Registration: Break the law, pay the price

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Connecticut has a gun problem.

It's estimated that perhaps scores of thousands of Connecticut residents failed to register their military-style assault weapons with state police by Dec. 31.

That's the deadline imposed by a tough bipartisan gun-safety law passed by the legislature last year in the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre.

Widespread noncompliance with this major element of a law that was seen as a speedy and hopefully effective response by Connecticut to mass shootings such as the one at Sandy Hook creates a headache for the state.

The dimensions of the unregistered guns problem were outlined in a Tuesday column by The Courant's Dan Haar.

Guns defined in state law as assault weapons can no longer be bought or sold in Connecticut. Such guns already held can be legally possessed if registered. But owning an unregistered assault weapon is a Class D felony. Felonies cannot go unenforced.

First, however, the registration period should be reopened. It should be accompanied by a public information campaign.

Although willful noncompliance with the law is doubtless a major issue, it's possible that many gun owners are unaware of their obligation to register military-style assault weapons and would do so if given another chance.

But the bottom line is that the state must try to enforce the law. Authorities should use the background check database as a way to find assault weapon purchasers who might not have registered those guns in compliance with the new law.

A Class D felony calls for a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Even much lesser penalties or probation would mar a heretofore clean record and could adversely affect, say, the ability to have a pistol permit.

If you want to disobey the law, you should be prepared to face the consequences.