

*New Jersey*  
*State Commission of Investigation*



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**Immediate Release**

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**SCI TAKES AIM  
AT GANGS, FIREARMS AMMO;  
CALLS FOR  
TOUGH NEW LAWS**

TRENTON – Declaring it a threat to public safety, the State Commission of Investigation today issued a report detailing the widespread subversion by gangs and other criminal elements of legal firearms ammunition sales and called for tough new laws to control access to ammo.

The Commission found widespread purchases of handgun ammunition by associates of violent street gangs and, utilizing criminal informants to make buys, revealed how easy it is to buy thousands of rounds of ammunition in New Jersey, no questions asked.

“While New Jersey maintains some of the most stringent and restrictive laws in the United States governing the purchase and sale of handguns, the trade in actual bullets – the very projectiles that make firearms lethal – remains a wide-open, unregulated bazaar,” the Commission stated. “The factual foundation established by the findings of this investigation provides an ample basis for long-overdue legislative, regulatory and prosecutorial remedies.”

During the course of its probe, which included a public hearing in December, the Commission tested and examined currently lawful sales of handgun ammunition in gun shops and sporting goods across the state and found the controls on access to it so weak that “the buyer could be a convicted felon, a gang member, someone with a history of mental illness or violence – a terrorist even. No matter: As currently structured, the system allows bullets to be sold indiscriminately.”

“It is patently ridiculous, shocking even, to contemplate a system that requires a background check and an official permit to own a handgun but . . . mandates nothing of the sort as a condition for purchasing the means to transform that gun into a deadly weapon,” the Commission concluded. “It is a system that undermines the authority of our police, makes a mockery of our gun control laws and renders the streets of our towns and cities more dangerous at the very moment we are struggling to come to grips with a rising tide of gang violence.”

Law enforcement authorities at the local, county, state and federal levels appeared before the Commission and unanimously joined in the call for strong legislative and regulatory controls on access to firearms ammunition.

The Commission's most fundamental recommendation would prohibit the sale of ammunition to anyone, including a convicted criminal, who is already barred from owning a firearm. As to legal purchases, the Commission recommends that no one be allowed to buy ammunition in New Jersey unless he/she is in possession of valid permit or license to own a firearm of the same caliber as the ammunition sought.

As detailed in its final report, the Commission also recommends:

- Upgrading and modernizing firearms ownership credentials to include digital photographs and firearm serial numbers.
- Prohibiting any sale or transfer of ammunition in New Jersey unless the transaction is conducted in person between the seller and the individual for whom the ammunition is intended.
- Regulating out-of-state purchases by New Jersey residents via mail order and the Internet.
- Tightening ammunition sales practices.
- Strengthening criminal penalties for unlawful ammunition sales, purchases and possession.
- Requiring dealers to maintain more detailed information on ammunition sales and authorize access to such information by law enforcement agencies at all levels.
- Boost licensure fees for the sale and purchase of firearms and statutorily dedicate the proceeds of such fees to strengthening the operation of the N.J. Division of State Police Firearms Investigation Unit.

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*The State Commission of Investigation is an independent New Jersey watchdog agency established in 1968 to investigate organized crime and corruption, waste of tax money and other abuses of the public trust. In addition to the ammunition investigation, a number of other significant probes are ongoing in all areas of the Commission's statutory purview. Copies of public reports are available at the Commission's offices or via its Web site at [www.state.nj.us/sci](http://www.state.nj.us/sci).*