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Lost, stolen guns must be reported

A bill pushed by first-term Rep. William Tong that requires gun owners to report lost or stolen firearms within 72 hours of discovering they are missing was signed into law by Gov. M. Jodi Rell Tuesday, August 7, during a ceremony at the East Haven Police Department.

Rep. Tong, a Democrat, represents the 147th District, which includes western New Canaan.

"Right now, police are often powerless if they trace a gun used in a crime back to its owner and the owner claims it was stolen," Gov. Rell said. "This law targets irresponsible gun owners in an attempt to stem the tide of stolen guns used in crimes in Connecticut. We think it will prove to be a useful tool for law enforcement by closing up a loophole in our laws."

Those who violate the new law could face penalties ranging from an infraction to a felony.

Under the bill, a first-time failure to report a lost or stolen gun within 72 hours is an infraction, punishable by a fine of up to \$90. Gun owners would not lose pistol permits for a first infraction.

Any subsequent unintentional failure to report a lost or stolen gun is a Class D felony, subject to a fine of up to \$5,000, up to five years in prison, or both.

Intentional failure to report a lost or stolen gun would be a Class C felony, punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

The law also requires the Department of Public Safety, when issuing permits to carry guns, to give permittees a copy of law requiring the reports.

"Prior law required the reports only for the theft of assault weapons and contained no penalties," Gov. Rell said. "The new law applies to any type of firearm and provides for appropriate penalties to be imposed."

The bill also establishes the crime of firearm trafficking for those who knowingly and intentionally give someone who cannot legally possess firearms access to his or her firearms. A violation involving more than five firearms is a class B felony. A violation involving five or fewer firearms is a class C felony. A violation can be punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000, imprisonment for up to five years, or both. The law does not apply to long guns or to antique firearms.

"An Act Concerning the Reporting of Lost and Stolen Firearms" takes effect October 1.

Similar laws already exist in Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio and Rhode Island.

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