

Healey Will Block Effort To Suspend Gun Law

As Law Kicks In, Volunteers Will Now Look To Repeal It In 2026

- [Chris Lisinski](#)

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, OCT. 1, 2024.....Gov. Maura Healey plans Wednesday to immediately implement a sweeping gun reform law, in the process blocking opponents who appear to be on the verge of suspending the law for more than two years until voters get the final say.

A spokesperson for the governor said Healey will sign an emergency preamble for the law finalized this summer, allowing many provisions to take effect right away instead on Oct. 23, which is 90 days after the governor signed the law.

The move will put much of the law into place immediately and push off the table the temporary suspension that opponents were eyeing as they pursue a 2026 ballot question to repeal the wide-ranging measure.

"This gun safety law bans ghost guns, strengthens the Extreme Risk Protection Order statute to keep guns out of the hands of people who are a danger to themselves or others, and invests in violence prevention programs. It is important that these measures go into effect without delay," Healey said in a statement Tuesday.

Opponents led by several gun owners groups and Second Amendment supporters are [pursuing a ballot question](#) to repeal the law. The group, which dubbed itself The Civil Rights Coalition, criticized Healey's decision on Tuesday and alleged an immediate start to some of the restrictions, especially on so-called long guns, could put gun shops out of business.

"It's like telling Subaru they can no longer sell a Subaru Forester, the best-selling vehicle in their lineup. That's basically what the state is doing to these businesses: they're saying you can no longer sell one of the largest and most profitable segments of your business," said Toby Leary, a co-owner of Cape Gun Works in Hyannis and chair of the repeal coalition.

To put the referendum before voters in 2026, the campaign must file at least 37,287 signatures with local elections officials by Oct. 9. The state Constitution lays out a second, higher target for signature-gatherers -- 49,716 this time around -- that would pause the law from taking effect until the election where the question will appear.

But there's a catch: if the governor declares a law an emergency law, it cannot be suspended as part of a referendum campaign.

If they can make the ballot, the groups who see the 115-page law as an unconstitutional overreach will now have a slightly different task. Instead of convincing voters not to let the measure take effect, they will need to make the case to undo a law that by that point will have been in place for more than two years.

Leary said he does not expect the campaign to alter its approach.

"The message is the same: this is an unconstitutional bill from the start. It should have never been passed," he said.

Supporters tout the measure as a way to further strengthen the state's already-extensive gun laws, noting that Massachusetts has one of the lowest rates of firearms violence in the country.

Leary said Tuesday that volunteers have collected more than 65,000 signatures so far, and he expects as many as 95,000 by the time they need to submit the paperwork for verification with local elections officials next week.

"That's the only reason [Healey is] acting. Make no mistake about it," Leary said. "The only reason she's signing this as an emergency preamble is because they don't want this suspended."

The campaign collected the signatures with "100 percent volunteers," he said, adding that "not a single paid signature-gatherer was employed in this campaign."

Opponents have described the repeal campaign as one prong of several challenging the law, which reaches across firearm-related topics including new restrictions on ghost guns, expansion of the state's red-flag law and a prohibition on firearms in certain public spaces.

Some residents and the Gun Owners Action League also filed a federal lawsuit alleging that parts of the law changing licensing requirements for firearms identification cards and licenses to carry are unconstitutional.

Laws without emergency preambles typically take effect 90 days after passage. House and Senate Democrats did not attach an emergency preamble to the gun law, which Healey signed on July 25.