

S.L. COUNCIL PASSES GUN-CONTROL MEASURES

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Despite heated opposition from gun advocates, anyone younger than 25 will soon have to wait five business days to obtain a gun in Salt Lake City.

The City Council unanimously passed strict gun-control measures aimed at youths Tuesday night. The move targets mounting gang violence along the Wasatch Front. However, City Council members said they really intend the law more as a wake-up call to state lawmakers. City ordinances accomplish little, especially in Salt Lake County where people can skirt local gun laws simply by driving to any of the other 12 cities where no such laws exist.

``We are taking this step to get the attention of the Legislature," said Councilman Paul Hutchison.

Fellow Councilman Don Hale added, ``We desperately need the help of the state."

State lawmakers are scheduled to meet soon to discuss how to deal with the proliferation of gangs. Police said gang-related crimes have risen from 1,741 in all of 1992 to 3,112 so far this year. Those include more than 62 drive-by shootings.

In an interview Wednesday, Gov. Mike Leavitt declined to detail any of the gun-control legislation he intends to propose as part of a package that will also include bills dealing with detention, prevention and the juvenile justice system.

Leavitt said some of the Salt Lake City Council's actions correlate to the package of gang-related bills he is planning to unveil Thursday at a law enforcement conference on gangs in St. George.

He has said he wants to add penalties to existing laws intended to keep guns out of the hands of youths and that he would not include a waiting period for the purchase of guns in his legislative package.

``I don't see that as a more effective part of how you go about this," he said Thursday. ``The kids we're concerned about are not buying guns at gun stores."

Most of the people who attended a public hearing on the city gun ordinance Tuesday said the new waiting period misses the mark.

“This ordinance is not going to keep guns out of the hands of gang members,” said Alan Wagner, who admitted to owning 32 guns, which he said he keeps out of the reach of his four children. “All you're going to do is keep guns out of the hands of honest people. It's not going to stop anyone who wants a gun from getting a gun.”

The list of opponents at the hearing included a spokesman for the National Rifle Association, who flew in from California, and a law-enforcement officer, Douglas Tenney.

He said gun-control measures do nothing to make his job easier.

“Gang leaders don't have respect for my badge,” Tenney said. “They won't have any respect for this ordinance.”

In addition to the five-day waiting period for anyone younger than 25, the ordinance prohibits the sale of a weapon to anyone younger than 18, makes it illegal for anyone younger than 18 to even possess a gun without special permission and would revoke the business license of anyone who had sold a gun to a minor.

Salt Lake Mayor Deedee Corradini said the ordinance is little more than a tool to help police.

“What we can do as a city is at least take a stand,” she said. “The time has come to say ‘Enough!’ We're going to take back our streets and our neighborhoods.”

Deseret News staff writer Lisa Riley Roche contributed to this story.