**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND CHAPTER 31, TITLE 23 OF THE 1976 CODE, RELATING TO FIREARMS, TO PROVIDE THAT A PERSON WHO OWNS A FIREARM SHALL REGISTER THE FIREARM WITH THE STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION; TO PROVIDE THAT THE STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION SHALL MAINTAIN A LIST OF FIREARM SERIAL NUMBERS; TO PROVIDE THAT THE STATE LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION MUST PUBLISH A REPORT; TO PROVIDE FOR PENALTIES; AND TO DEFINE NECESSARY TERMS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 31, Title 23 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 23‑31‑30. (A) For the purposes of this section, ‘firearm’ means a weapon which is designed to or readily may be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive, or the frame or receiver of that weapon.

(B)(1) A person who owns a firearm within this State shall register the firearm’s serial number and the person’s contact information with SLED within thirty days of purchase.

(2) Any change of contact information must be communicated in writing to SLED within ten days of the change.

(C) A person who owns a firearm that does not have a serial number shall bring the firearm to SLED headquarters to have it registered in a manner determined by SLED.

(D) SLED must maintain a list of all firearm serial numbers and the names and contact information for each person to whom the firearm is registered. SLED may release the list of firearm serial numbers or verify the status of the serial number only if the request is made by a law enforcement agency to aid in an official investigation, or if the list is required to be released pursuant to a subpoena or court order. SLED may charge a fee not to exceed its costs in releasing the information under this subsection. Except as otherwise provided in the subsection, a person in possession of a list of firearm serial numbers obtained from SLED must destroy the list.

(E) During the first quarter of each calendar year, SLED must publish a report of the information regarding the previous calendar year. The report must include a breakdown of the information by county.

(F) A person who fails to register the firearm’s serial number in accordance with this section is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than five years, or both.”

SECTION 2. A person who owns a firearm as of the effective date of this act shall have one year from the effective date of this act to register his firearm with SLED. During the first year after the effective date of this act, the penalty provision contained in this act shall be suspended for violations by a person who owned a firearm prior to the effective date of this act. In lieu of the penalties for those people, warnings shall be issued for violations. The warnings must include information related to registration requirements and the manner in which the owner of a firearm must register the firearm. SLED shall undertake an educational campaign to inform the public of the registration requirements contained in this act.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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