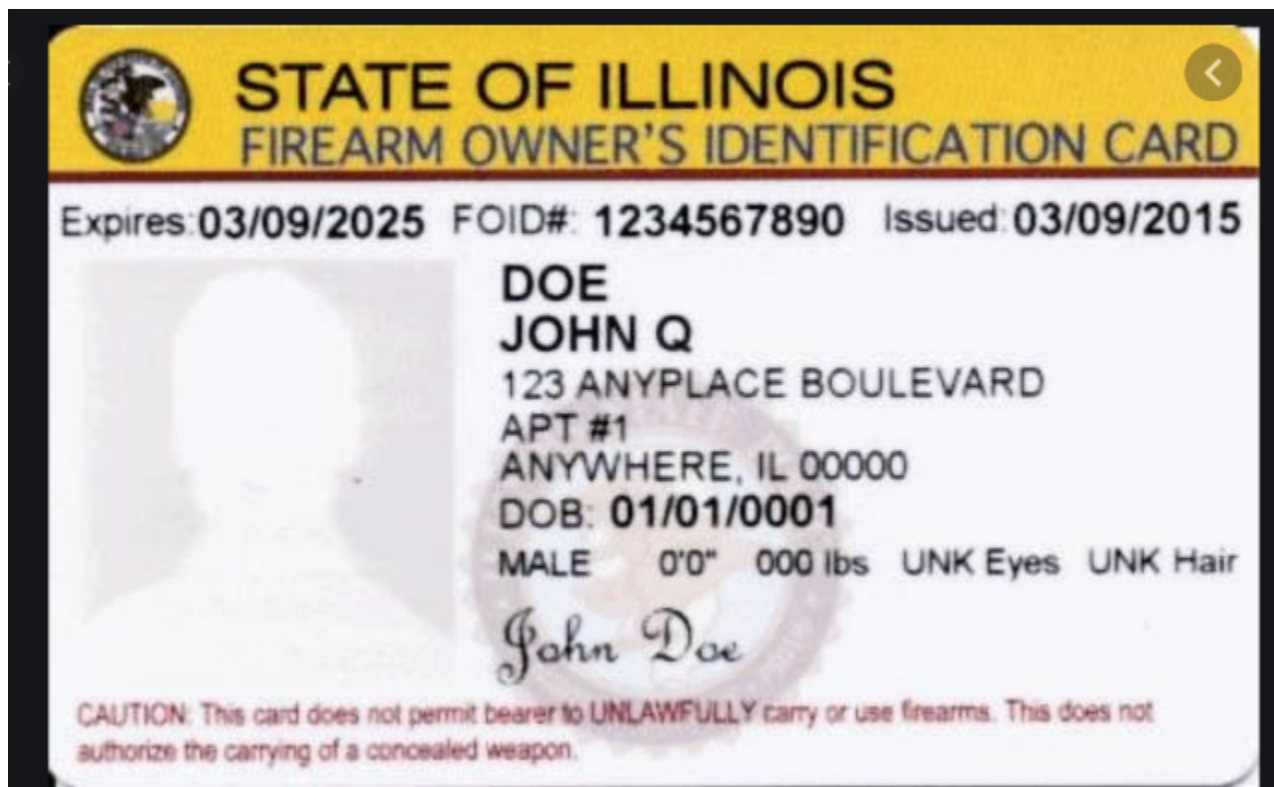


Illinois Concealed Carry Renewal Backlogs Persist

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The Center Square – A state senator says the same “all hands on deck” approach that Illinois’ governor took to expunge cannabis convictions should be used to clear the backlog of Concealed Carry License applications.

A patchwork of U.S. states have varying degrees of laws dealing with who can or cannot carry a firearm. Most states don’t require a permit for a resident to buy guns or ammo. Other states allow anyone to carry a gun in the open or even concealed without a permit.

Indiana's governor earlier this month signed a bill eliminating the permit to carry a gun in public. That's after Iowa's governor last year eliminated that state's permit requirement to purchase or carry a gun.

Illinois law requires a resident to have a state-issued Firearm Owner's Identification Card (FOID) to purchase or own guns or ammo. There is no open-carry allowed. Concealed carry must be permitted through a Concealed Carry License (CCL) issued by Illinois State Police.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Illinoisans applying for state-issued FOID and CCLs were waiting in excess of a year or more in some cases.

During a Senate committee last week, state Sen. Terri Bryant, R-Murphysborow, told Illinois State Police Director Brendan Kelly that problems persist despite a clearing of FOID card backlogs.

"You've increased the ability to get those done, but to date, I still have some folks that are waiting 18 months on CCL," Bryant said.

Kelly said they're working on it.

"That is the last category that we have to address," Kelly said. "We are steadily heading in the right direction and my hope is by the time we get to the summer, we'll be well within the statutory timeframe there."

Data compiled by ISP shows that in February, the average time frame for processing new CCL applications was 115 days. That's within the 120 days allowed by state law. It's taking an average of 110 days if fingerprints are provided when it's supposed to take no more than 90 days. The agency does not publish the average time it's taking to issue CCL renewals.

"We have no choice. We have to be in compliance with the law," Kelly said. "We have to make sure people's ability to access what they need to protect themselves is appropriately addressed in a timely manner."

Bryant suggested something she said shouldn't be construed as snarky and that's taking an "all hands on deck" approach to clearing the backlog as Gov. J.B. Pritzker took to clearing cannabis expungements.

“I would suggest that you ask the governor’s office to take the manpower that they used to expunge those marijuana cases and give them to you for a period of time in order to get rid of this CCL and FOID backlog,” Bryant said.

Gun laws in The Land of Lincoln face multiple challenges in federal and state courts. Earlier this month, the Illinois Supreme Court heard one such case.

In 2017, Vivian Brown, an elderly resident of White County, was charged with violating the FOID card law for owning a rifle kept in her home without possessing a FOID card. A county judge last year ruled in favor of Brown. On appeal, the Illinois Supreme Court took the case under advisement. Observers expect the case to be decided in several months.