

1998 Law Reduces Firearm Licenses by 86%

In a report released by the Massachusetts House Post Audit and Oversight Committee, the Massachusetts Agency charged with keeping the records of every licensed gun owner in the state admitted that it failed to notify almost three quarters of a million gun owners that their Firearms Identification Card (FID Card) would expire prematurely.

In the report, the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) and the Firearms Record Bureau (FRB) admitted that 1,251,808 of the 1,541,201 pre-1998 firearms licenses are now unaccounted for!

The licenses broke down as follows:

	Pre-1998	Current	Unaccounted
LTCs	170,825	136,118	34,707
FIDs	1,280,643	63,542	1,217,101

The report does little to explain the 34,707 LTCs that are unaccounted for, other than suggest that the new disqualifiers under the MGCA (Massachusetts Gun Control Act of 1998) may be responsible for a portion of them. The report does go into more detail about the 1,217,101 FIDs that are unaccounted for.

In the report, the agency for the first time publicly admits that of the 1,280,643 FID cardholders on file, notices about the new law requirements were only mailed out to 556,615 license holders or 43% of the original number. The records also show that of those that were supposedly sent out notifications, only 63,542 responded and renewed their license. That would mean that **only 5%** of the FID cardholder's on file prior to the MGCA are currently licensed.

There were references to attempts at bringing the local licensing authorities into the notification process as well. This process failed because the agency claims that of all of the FID card records on file, 867,552 or 68% of them "contained no information relative to the identity of the licensing authority". That created a very important question. How could the agency charged with tracking licensed gun owners not know where 56% of the licenses came from?

The CHSB and the FRB tried to explain some of these startling numbers by stating that some who were issued lifetime FIDs, prior to the MGCA, have likely **moved out of state, died or simply aged to a point that they are no longer interested** in obtaining a new FID. To illustrate that point, the agency was quoted in the report as stating, "...as of October 20, 1998, there were 221,981 active lifetime FIDs to holders that were between 72 and 120".

Even if everyone over the age of 72 was dead or lost interest, that would mean that the CHSB and the FRB believe that almost 1 million other people moved.

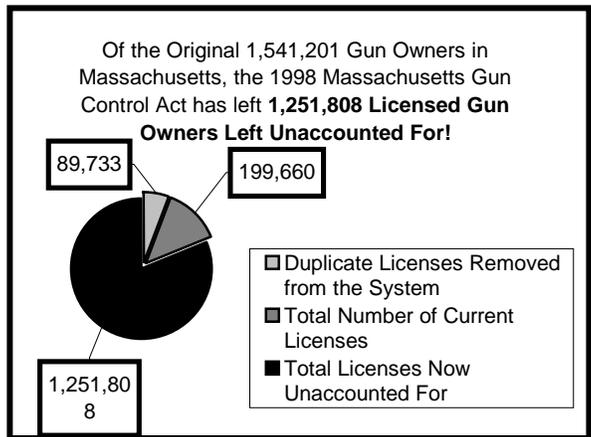
Another attempt to explain some of the lost licenses was the duplication of records. This was caused by the licensing system prior to the MGCA. In that period, citizens would often obtain an FID early on and

then apply for an LTC later. This explanation certainly makes sense, however, the FRB only found 89,733 multiple records within the original 1,541,201.

When interviewed in a recent Associated Press article about the drop in license numbers, Senator Cheryl Jacques was quoted as saying “You weed out the clutter. Instead of a big pile of FID cards that don’t connect to anyone, we have law enforcement knowing whose licenses are current.”

With this report now on public record we now have some serious questions that need to be answered and some points to make:

- Should the head of these agencies be held accountable for the lack of effort to notify license holders about the new laws?
- At some point, someone in the agency should have realized that there was a problem, why didn’t they?
- With this new information in mind, shouldn’t the legislature pass emergency legislation placing a moratorium on any further expired license prosecutions until this matter is resolved?
- Shouldn’t anyone who has already been prosecuted for being in possession of an expired FID card be immediately pardoned and their records expunged?
- How would the legislature react if they realized that one sixth of the state’s population were made potential criminals by the MGCA?
- How much revenue has been lost by the state because these licenses were not renewed? (License fees, sales tax, hunting licenses, etc.)
- Could local municipalities handle the number of license applications if everyone was properly notified?



FID Card Results of the 1998 Massachusetts Gun Control Act

