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CHAPTER 31.

FIREARMS

ARTICLE 1.

PURCHASE OF RIFLES AND SHOTGUNS

**SECTION 23‑31‑10.** Purchase of rifle or shotgun in contiguous state.

Any resident of this State including a corporation or other business entity maintaining a place of business in this State, who may lawfully purchase and receive delivery of a rifle or shotgun in this State, may purchase a rifle or shotgun in a contiguous state and transport or receive the same in this State; provided, that the sale meets the lawful requirements of each such state, meets all lawful requirements of any Federal statute, and is made by a licensed importer, licensed manufacturer, licensed dealer, or licensed collector.

**SECTION 23‑31‑20.** Purchase of rifle or shotgun in this State by resident of any state.

A resident of any state may purchase rifles and shotguns in this State if the resident conforms to applicable provisions of statutes and regulations of this State, the United States, and of the state in which the person resides.

ARTICLE 3.

REGULATION OF PISTOLS

**SECTION 23‑31‑110.** Definitions.

When used in this article:

(a) “Pistol” means any firearm designed to expel a projectile and designed to be fired from the hand, but shall not include any firearm generally recognized or classified as an antique, curiosity, or collector’s item, or any that does not fire fixed cartridges.

(b) The term “dealer” means any person engaged in the business of selling firearms at retail or any person who is a pawnbroker.

(c) The term “crime of violence” means murder, manslaughter (except negligent manslaughter arising out of traffic accidents), rape, mayhem, kidnapping, burglary, robbery, housebreaking, assault with intent to kill, commit rape, or rob, assault with a dangerous weapon, or assault with intent to commit any offense punishable by imprisonment for more than one year.

(d) The term “fugitive from justice” means any person who has fled from or is fleeing from any law enforcement officer to avoid prosecution or imprisonment for a crime of violence.

(e) The term “subversive organization” means any group, committee, club, league, society, association or combination of individuals the purpose of which, or one of the purposes of which, is the establishment, control, conduct, seizure or overthrow of the government of the United States or any state or political subdivision thereof, by the use of force, violence, espionage, sabotage, or threats or attempts of any of the foregoing.

(f) The term “conviction” as used herein shall include pleas of guilty, pleas of nolo contendere and forfeiture of bail.

(g) The term “division” shall mean the State Law Enforcement Division.

(h) The terms “purchase” or “sell” mean to knowingly buy, offer to buy, receive, lease, rent, barter, exchange, pawn or accept in pawn.

(i) The term “person” shall mean any individual, corporation, company, association, firm, partnership, society or joint stock company.

**SECTION 23‑31‑130.** Retail dealers shall be licensed.

No retail dealer shall sell or otherwise transfer, or expose for sale or transfer, or have in his possession with intent to sell, or otherwise transfer, any pistol without being licensed as hereinafter provided.

**SECTION 23‑31‑140.** Purchase of pistol; residency requirement; driver’s license as proof; exceptions.

(A) A person may not purchase a pistol from a dealer unless he is a resident of this State. For the purpose of this article, the possession of a valid South Carolina driver’s license or Department of Motor Vehicles identification card constitutes proof of residency. However, residency is not required of a person who is on active duty in the United States military and who is in possession of a current United States military identification card.

(B) For purposes of this section, the purchase of a pistol does not include the redeeming of a pistol by its owner after it has been pledged to secure a loan.

**SECTION 23‑31‑150.** Issuance, duration, conditions and forfeiture of retail dealer’s license.

The division shall grant a license to any person doing business in the State not ineligible to purchase, acquire, or possess a pistol or be licensed as a dealer under the provisions of this article. Licenses shall be issued on a form furnished by the division and be effective for two years from the date of issuance. Licensees shall be authorized to sell pistols at retail as dealers within this State subject to the following conditions, for breach of any of which the license shall be forfeited:

(a) The license or a copy thereof, authenticated by the issuing authority, shall at all times and places of sale be available for inspection or displayed where it can easily be read.

(b) No pistol shall knowingly be sold in violation of any provision of this article nor shall any pistol be sold without clear evidence as to the identity of the purchaser being furnished to the dealer.

(c) The fee for the issuance of such license shall be one hundred dollars and for renewal one hundred dollars every two years. The license fees shall be retained by the division for purposes of defraying the costs of administering the provisions of this article.

(d) Each applicant for a license shall post with the division a bond in favor of the State with surety in the amount of ten thousand dollars. No bond shall be accepted for filing unless it is with a surety company authorized to do business in this State and conditioned that the principal named therein shall not do any act meriting suspension or revocation of his license under provisions of this article. In lieu of a bond, a cash deposit or a deposit of other securities acceptable to the division of a value of ten thousand dollars shall be accepted. Any person aggrieved by any act of the principal named in such bond may in an action against the principal or surety therein, or both, recover damages. The aggregate liability of the surety for all breaches of the conditions of the bond shall, in no event, exceed the amount of such bond. The surety on the bond shall have the right to cancel such bond giving thirty days’ notice to the division and thereafter shall be relieved of liability for any breach of condition after the effective date of the cancellation.

(e) In order to insure compliance with the provisions of this article, dealers shall make available for inspection by the chief of the division or his agents, during normal business hours, all pistols in their possession.

(f) Each applicant for a license shall furnish to the division a current federal firearms license and is required to maintain that federal firearms license in good standing as a condition of holding a retail dealer license issued under this section.

(g) A breach of any of the above conditions or violations of any provisions of this article by a dealer shall result in forfeiture of license, but the licensee is entitled to reasonable notice and proper hearing in the circuit court of the county in which he is licensed.

**SECTION 23‑31‑160.** Giving false information or evidence.

No person shall give false information or evidence regarding any information or evidence required herein.

**SECTION 23‑31‑170.** Mortgage, deposit or pledge of pistol.

Only a licensed dealer shall make a loan secured by a mortgage, deposit or pledge of a pistol and the dealer shall keep such records as are required herein. A licensed dealer may mortgage any pistol or stock of pistols but shall not deposit the same with any other person.

**SECTION 23‑31‑180.** Certain pistols declared to be contraband; forfeiture, seizure, and destruction; disposal restrictions; use for display.

No licensed retail dealer may hold, store, handle, sell, offer for sale, or otherwise possess in his place of business a pistol or other handgun which has a die‑cast, metal alloy frame or receiver which melts at a temperature of less than eight hundred degrees Fahrenheit.

A pistol or other handgun possessed or sold by a dealer in violation of this article is declared to be contraband and must be forfeited to or seized by the law enforcement agency in the municipality where forfeited or seized or to the law enforcement agency in the county where forfeited or seized if forfeited or seized outside a municipality. The weapon must be destroyed by the law enforcement agency which seized the weapon or the law enforcement agency to which the weapon is forfeited. A weapon must not be disposed of in any manner until the results of any legal proceeding in which it may be involved are finally determined.

However, a law enforcement agency may use the weapon for display purposes after the weapon has been rendered inoperable.

**SECTION 23‑31‑190.** Penalties; disposition of fines; forfeiture and disposition of pistols.

A person, including a dealer who violates the provisions of this article is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than two thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.

In addition to the penalty provided in this section the pistol involved in the violation must be confiscated. The pistol must be delivered to the chief of police of the municipality or to the sheriff of the county, if the violation occurred outside the corporate limits of a municipality. The law enforcement agencies that receive the confiscated pistols may use them within their department, transfer them to another law enforcement agency, or destroy them. Records must be kept of all confiscated pistols received by the law enforcement agencies under the provisions of this article.

**SECTION 23‑31‑200.** Construction.

Provisions of this article shall not be construed to grant any additional police powers not authorized by law, nor in any manner affect the powers of constables commissioned by the Governor.

ARTICLE 4.

CONCEALED WEAPON PERMITS

**SECTION 23‑31‑205.** Name.

This article may be cited as the “Law Abiding Citizens Self‑Defense Act of 1996”.

**SECTION 23‑31‑210.** Definitions.

As used in this article:

(1) “Resident” means an individual who is present in South Carolina with the intention of making a permanent home in South Carolina or military personnel on permanent change of station orders.

(2) “Qualified nonresident” means an individual who owns real property in South Carolina, but who resides in another state.

(3) “Picture identification” means:

(a) a valid South Carolina driver’s license, or if the applicant is a qualified nonresident, a valid driver’s license issued by the state in which the applicant resides; or

(b) an official photographic identification card issued by the Department of Revenue, a federal or state law enforcement agency, an agency of the United States Department of Defense, or the United States Department of State.

(4) “Proof of residence” means a person’s current address on the original or certified copy of:

(a) a valid South Carolina driver’s license;

(b) an official identification card issued by the Department of Revenue, a federal or state law enforcement agency, an agency of the United States Department of Defense, or the United States Department of State;

(c) a voter registration card; or

(d) another document that SLED may determine that fulfills this requirement.

(5) “Proof of training” means an original document or certified copy of the document supplied by an applicant that certifies that he is either:

(a) a person who, within three years before filing an application, has successfully completed a basic or advanced handgun education course offered by a state, county, or municipal law enforcement agency or a nationally recognized organization that promotes gun safety. This education course must be a minimum of eight hours and must include, but is not limited to:

(i) information on the statutory and case law of this State relating to handguns and to the use of deadly force;

(ii) information on handgun use and safety;

(iii) information on the proper storage practice for handguns with an emphasis on storage practices that reduces the possibility of accidental injury to a child; and

(iv) the actual firing of the handgun in the presence of the instructor;

(b) an instructor certified by the National Rifle Association or another SLED‑approved competent national organization that promotes the safe use of handguns;

(c) a person who can demonstrate to the Director of SLED or his designee that he has a proficiency in both the use of handguns and state laws pertaining to handguns;

(d) an active duty police handgun instructor;

(e) a person who has a SLED‑certified or approved competitive handgun shooting classification; or

(f) a member of the active or reserve military, or a member of the National Guard who has had handgun training in the previous three years.

SLED shall promulgate regulations containing general guidelines for courses and qualifications for instructors which would satisfy the requirements of this item. For purposes of subitems (a) and (b), “proof of training” is not satisfied unless the organization and its instructors meet or exceed the guidelines and qualifications contained in the regulations promulgated by SLED pursuant to this item.

(6) “Concealable weapon” means a firearm having a length of less than twelve inches measured along its greatest dimension that must be carried in a manner that is hidden from public view in normal wear of clothing except when needed for self‑defense, defense of others, and the protection of real or personal property.

(7) “Proof of ownership of real property” means a certified current document from the county assessor of the county in which the property is located verifying ownership of the real property. SLED must determine the appropriate document that fulfills this requirement.

**SECTION 23‑31‑215.** Issuance of permits.

(A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, except subject to subsection (B) of this section, SLED must issue a permit, which is no larger than three and one‑half inches by three inches in size, to carry a concealable weapon to a resident or qualified nonresident who is at least twenty‑one years of age and who is not prohibited by state law from possessing the weapon upon submission of:

(1) a completed application signed by the person;

(2) one current full face color photograph of the person, not smaller than one inch by one inch nor larger than three inches by five inches;

(3) proof of residence or if the person is a qualified nonresident, proof of ownership of real property in this State;

(4) proof of actual or corrected vision rated at 20/40 within six months of the date of application or, in the case of a person licensed to operate a motor vehicle in this State, presentation of a valid driver’s license;

(5) proof of training;

(6) payment of a fifty‑dollar application fee. This fee must be waived for disabled veterans and retired law enforcement officers; and

(7) a complete set of fingerprints unless, because of a medical condition verified in writing by a licensed medical doctor, a complete set of fingerprints is impossible to submit. In lieu of the submission of fingerprints, the applicant must submit the written statement from a licensed medical doctor specifying the reason or reasons why the applicant’s fingerprints may not be taken. If all other qualifications are met, the Chief of SLED may waive the fingerprint requirements of this item. The statement of medical limitation must be attached to the copy of the application retained by SLED. A law enforcement agency may charge a fee not to exceed five dollars for fingerprinting an applicant.

(B) Upon submission of the items required by subsection (A) of this section, SLED must conduct or facilitate a local, state, and federal fingerprint review of the applicant. SLED must also conduct a background check of the applicant through notification to and input from the sheriff of the county where the applicant resides or if the applicant is a qualified nonresident, where the applicant owns real property in this State. The sheriff within ten working days after notification by SLED, must submit a recommendation on an application. Before making a determination whether or not to issue a permit under this article, SLED must consider the recommendation provided pursuant to this subsection. The failure of the sheriff to submit a recommendation within the ten‑day period constitutes a favorable recommendation for the issuance of the permit to the applicant. If the fingerprint review and background check are favorable, SLED must issue the permit.

(C) SLED shall issue a written statement to an unqualified applicant specifying its reasons for denying the application within ninety days from the date the application was received; otherwise, SLED shall issue a concealable weapon permit. If an applicant is unable to comply with the provisions of Section 23‑31‑210(4), SLED shall offer the applicant a handgun training course that satisfies the requirements of Section 23‑31‑210(4)(a). The course shall cost fifty dollars. SLED shall use the proceeds to defray the training course’s operating costs. If a permit is granted by operation of law because an applicant was not notified of a denial within the ninety‑day notification period, the permit may be revoked upon written notification from SLED that sufficient grounds exist for revocation or initial denial.

(D) Denial of an application may be appealed. The appeal must be in writing and state the basis for the appeal. The appeal must be submitted to the Chief of SLED within thirty days from the date the denial notice is received. The chief shall issue a written decision within ten days from the date the appeal is received. An adverse decision shall specify the reasons for upholding the denial and may be reviewed by the Administrative Law Judge Division pursuant to Article 5, Chapter 23 of Title 1, upon a petition filed by an applicant within thirty days from the date of delivery of the division’s decision.

(E) SLED must make permit application forms available to the public. A permit application form shall require an applicant to supply:

(1) name, including maiden name if applicable;

(2) date and place of birth;

(3) sex;

(4) race;

(5) height;

(6) weight;

(7) eye and hair color;

(8) current residence address, or if the applicant is a qualified nonresident, current residence address and where the applicant owns real property in this State; and

(9) all residence addresses for the three years preceding the application date.

(F) The permit application form shall require the applicant to certify that:

(1) he is not a person prohibited under state law from possessing a weapon;

(2) he understands the permit is revoked and must be surrendered immediately to SLED if the permit holder becomes a person prohibited under state law from possessing a weapon;

(3) he is a resident of this State, is military personnel on permanent change of station orders, or is a qualified nonresident; and

(4) all information contained in his application is true and correct to the best of his knowledge.

(G) Medical personnel, law enforcement agencies, organizations offering handgun education courses pursuant to Section 23‑31‑210(4)(a), and their personnel, who in good faith provide information regarding a person’s application, must be exempt from liability that may arise from issuance of a permit; provided, however, a weapons instructor must meet the requirements established in Section 23‑31‑210(4)(b), (c), (d), (e), or (f) in order to be exempt from liability under this subsection.

(H) A permit application must be submitted in person or by mail to SLED headquarters which shall verify the legibility and accuracy of the required documents.

(I) SLED must maintain a list of all permit holders and the current status of each permit. SLED may release the list of permit holders or verify an individual’s permit status 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 this subsection, a person in possession of a list of permit holders obtained from SLED must destroy the list.

(J) A permit is valid statewide unless revoked because the person has:

(1) become a person prohibited under state law from possessing a weapon;

(2) moved his permanent residence to another state and no longer owns real property in this State;

(3) voluntarily surrendered the permit; or

(4) been charged with an offense that, upon conviction, would prohibit the person from possessing a firearm. However, if the person subsequently is found not guilty of the offense, then his permit must be reinstated at no charge.

Once a permit is revoked, it must be surrendered to a sheriff, police department, a SLED agent, or by certified mail to the Chief of SLED. A person who fails to surrender his permit in accordance with this subsection is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined twenty‑five dollars.

(K) A permit holder must have his permit identification card in his possession whenever he carries a concealable weapon. When carrying a concealable weapon pursuant to Article 4 of Chapter 31 of Title 23, a permit holder must inform a law enforcement officer of the fact that he is a permit holder and present the permit identification card when an officer (1) identifies himself as a law enforcement officer and (2) requests identification or a driver’s license from a permit holder. A permit holder immediately must report the loss or theft of a permit identification card to SLED headquarters. A person who violates the provisions of this subsection is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined twenty‑five dollars.

(L) SLED shall issue a replacement for lost, stolen, damaged, or destroyed permit identification cards after the permit holder has updated all information required in the original application and the payment of a five‑dollar replacement fee. Any change of permanent address must be communicated in writing to SLED within ten days of the change accompanied by the payment of a fee of five dollars to defray the cost of issuance of a new permit. SLED shall then issue a new permit with the new address. A permit holder’s failure to notify SLED in accordance with this subsection constitutes a misdemeanor punishable by a twenty‑five dollar fine. The original permit shall remain in force until receipt of the corrected permit identification card by the permit holder, at which time the original permit must be returned to SLED.

(M) A permit issued pursuant to this section does not authorize a permit holder to carry a concealable weapon into a:

(1) police, sheriff, or highway patrol station or any other law enforcement office or facility;

(2) detention facility, prison, or jail or any other correctional facility or office;

(3) courthouse or courtroom;

(4) polling place on election days;

(5) office of or the business meeting of the governing body of a county, public school district, municipality, or special purpose district;

(6) school or college athletic event not related to firearms;

(7) daycare facility or pre‑school facility;

(8) place where the carrying of firearms is prohibited by federal law;

(9) church or other established religious sanctuary unless express permission is given by the appropriate church official or governing body; or

(10) hospital, medical clinic, doctor’s office, or any other facility where medical services or procedures are performed unless expressly authorized by the employer.

A person who wilfully violates a provision of this subsection is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not less than one thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than one year, or both, at the discretion of the court and have his permit revoked for five years.

Nothing contained herein may be construed to alter or affect the provisions of Sections 10‑11‑320, 16‑23‑420, 16‑23‑430, 16‑23‑465, 44‑23‑1080, 44‑52‑165, 50‑9‑830, and 51‑3‑145.

(N) Valid out‑of‑state permits to carry concealable weapons held by a resident of a reciprocal state must be honored by this State, provided, that the reciprocal state requires an applicant to successfully pass a criminal background check and a course in firearm training and safety. A resident of a reciprocal state carrying a concealable weapon in South Carolina is subject to and must abide by the laws of South Carolina regarding concealable weapons. SLED shall maintain and publish a list of those states as the states with which South Carolina has reciprocity.

(O) A permit issued pursuant to this article is not required for a person:

(1) specified in Section 16‑23‑20, items (1) through (5) and items (7) through (11);

(2) carrying a self‑defense device generally considered to be nonlethal including the substance commonly referred to as “pepper gas”;

(3) carrying a concealable weapon in a manner not prohibited by law.

(P) A permit issued pursuant to this article is valid for four years. Subject to subsection (Q) of this section, SLED shall renew a currently valid permit upon:

(1) payment of a fifty‑dollar renewal fee by the applicant. This fee must be waived for disabled veterans and retired law enforcement officers;

(2) completion of the renewal application; and

(3) submission of a photocopy of the applicant’s valid South Carolina driver’s license or South Carolina identification card, or if the applicant is a qualified nonresident, a photocopy of the applicant’s valid driver’s license or identification card issued by the state in which the applicant resides.

(Q) Upon submission of the items required by subsection (P) of this section, SLED must conduct or facilitate a local, state, and federal fingerprint review of the applicant. If the background check is favorable, SLED must renew the permit.

(R) No provision contained within this article shall expand, diminish, or affect the duty of care owed by and liability accruing to, as may exist at law immediately before the effective date of this article, the owner of or individual in legal possession of real property for the injury or death of an invitee, licensee, or trespasser caused by the use or misuse by a third party of a concealable weapon. Absence of a sign prohibiting concealable weapons shall not constitute negligence or establish a lack of duty of care.

(S) Once a concealed weapon permit holder is no longer a resident of this State or is no longer a qualified nonresident, his concealed weapon permit is void, and immediately must be surrendered to SLED.

(T) During the first quarter of each calendar year, SLED must publish a report of the following information regarding the previous calendar year:

(1) the number of permits;

(2) the number of permits that were issued;

(3) the number of permit applications that were denied;

(4) the number of permits that were renewed;

(5) the number of permit renewals that were denied;

(6) the number of permits that were suspended or revoked; and

(7) the name, address, and county of a person whose permit was revoked, including the reason for the revocation under Section 23‑31‑215(J)(1).

The report must include a breakdown of such information by county.

**SECTION 23‑31‑216.** Collection and retention of fees.

[Section effective until July 1, 2009. See, also, section effective July 1, 2009.]

The State Law Enforcement Division shall collect, retain, and carry forward all fees associated with the concealable weapon application, renewal, and replacement of the permit, as provided for in this article.

**SECTION 23‑31‑216.** Collection and retention of fees.

[Section effective July 1, 2009.]

The State Law Enforcement Division shall collect, retain, expend, and carry forward all fees associated with the concealable weapon application, renewal, and replacement of the permit, as provided pursuant to this article.

**SECTION 23‑31‑217.** Effect on Section 16‑23‑20.

Nothing in this article shall affect the provisions of Section 16‑23‑20.

**SECTION 23‑31‑220.** Right to allow or permit concealed weapons upon premises; signs.

Nothing contained in this article shall in any way be construed to limit, diminish, or otherwise infringe upon:

(1) the right of a public or private employer to prohibit a person who is licensed under this article from carrying a concealable weapon upon the premises of the business or work place or while using any machinery, vehicle, or equipment owned or operated by the business;

(2) the right of a private property owner or person in legal possession or control to allow or prohibit the carrying of a concealable weapon upon his premises.

The posting by the employer, owner, or person in legal possession or control of a sign stating “No Concealable Weapons Allowed” shall constitute notice to a person holding a permit issued pursuant to this article that the employer, owner, or person in legal possession or control requests that concealable weapons not be brought upon the premises or into the work place. A person who brings a concealable weapon onto the premises or work place in violation of the provisions of this paragraph may be charged with a violation of Section 16‑11‑620. In addition to the penalties provided in Section 16‑11‑620, a person convicted of a second or subsequent violation of the provisions of this paragraph must have his permit revoked for a period of one year. The prohibition contained in this section does not apply to persons specified in Section 16‑23‑20, item (1).

**SECTION 23‑31‑225.** Carrying concealed weapons into residences or dwellings.

No person who holds a permit issued pursuant to Article 4, Chapter 31, Title 23 may carry a concealable weapon into the residence or dwelling place of another person without the express permission of the owner or person in legal control or possession, as appropriate. A person who violates this provision is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not less than one thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both, at the discretion of the court and have his permit revoked for five years.

**SECTION 23‑31‑230.** Carrying concealed weapons between automobile and accommodation.

Notwithstanding any provision of law, any person may carry a concealable weapon from an automobile or other motorized conveyance to a room or other accommodation he has rented and upon which an accommodations tax has been paid.

**SECTION 23‑31‑235.** Sign requirements.

(A) Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, any requirement of or allowance for the posting of signs prohibiting the carrying of a concealable weapon upon any premises shall only be satisfied by a sign expressing the prohibition in both written language interdict and universal sign language.

(B) All signs must be posted at each entrance into a building where a concealable weapon permit holder is prohibited from carrying a concealable weapon and must be:

(1) clearly visible from outside the building;

(2) eight inches wide by twelve inches tall in size;

(3) contain the words “NO CONCEALABLE WEAPONS ALLOWED” in black one‑inch tall uppercase type at the bottom of the sign and centered between the lateral edges of the sign;

(4) contain a black silhouette of a handgun inside a circle seven inches in diameter with a diagonal line that runs from the lower left to the upper right at a forty‑five degree angle from the horizontal;

(5) a diameter of a circle; and

(6) placed not less than forty inches and not more than sixty inches from the bottom of the building’s entrance door.

(C) If the premises where concealable weapons are prohibited does not have doors, then the signs contained in subsection (A) must be:

(1) thirty‑six inches wide by forty‑eight inches tall in size;

(2) contain the words “NO CONCEALABLE WEAPONS ALLOWED” in black three‑ inch tall uppercase type at the bottom of the sign and centered between the lateral edges of the sign;

(3) contain a black silhouette of a handgun inside a circle thirty‑four inches in diameter with a diagonal line that is two inches wide and runs from the lower left to the upper right at a forty‑five degree angle from the horizontal and must be a diameter of a circle whose circumference is two inches wide;

(4) placed not less than forty inches and not more than ninety‑six inches above the ground;

(5) posted in sufficient quantities to be clearly visible from any point of entry onto the premises.

**SECTION 23‑31‑240.** Persons allowed to carry concealed weapon while on duty.

Notwithstanding any other provision contained in this article, the following persons who possess a valid permit pursuant to this article may carry a concealable weapon anywhere within this State, when carrying out the duties of their office:

(1) active Supreme Court justices;

(2) active judges of the court of appeals;

(3) active circuit court judges;

(4) active family court judges;

(5) active masters‑in‑equity;

(6) active probate court judges;

(7) active magistrates;

(8) active municipal court judges;

(9) active federal judges;

(10) active administrative law judges;

(11) active solicitors and assistant solicitors; and

(12) active workers’ compensation commissioners.

ARTICLE 5.

USE AND POSSESSION OF MACHINE GUNS, SAWED‑OFF SHOTGUNS AND RIFLES

**SECTION 23‑31‑310.** Definitions.

When used in this article:

(a) “Machine gun” applies to and includes any weapon which shoots, is designed to shoot, or can be readily restored to shoot, automatically more than one shot, without manual reloading, by a single function of the trigger. The term shall also include the frame or receiver of any such weapon, any combination or parts designed and intended for use in converting a weapon into a machine gun, and any combination of parts from which a machine gun can be assembled if such parts are in the possession or under the control of a person.

(b) “Sawed‑off shotgun” means a shotgun having a barrel or barrels of less than eighteen inches in length or a weapon made from a shotgun which as modified has an overall length of less than twenty‑six inches or a barrel or barrels of less than eighteen inches in length.

(c) “Shotgun” means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed shotgun shell to fire through a smooth bore either a number of ball shot or a single projectile for each pull of the trigger. The term includes any such weapon which may be readily restored to fire a fixed shotgun shell but does not include an antique firearm as defined in this section.

(d) “Sawed‑off rifle” means a rifle having a barrel or barrels of less than sixteen inches in length or a weapon made from a rifle which as modified has an overall length of less than twenty‑six inches or a barrel or barrels of less than sixteen inches in length.

(e) “Rifle” means a weapon designed or redesigned, made or remade, and intended to be fired from the shoulder and designed or redesigned and made or remade to use the energy of the explosive in a fixed cartridge to fire only a single projectile through a rifled bore for each single pull of the trigger. The term includes any such weapon which may be readily restored to fire a fixed cartridge but does not include an antique firearm as described in this section.

(f) “Antique firearm” means any firearm not designed or redesigned for using rim fire or conventional center fire ignition with fixed ammunition and manufactured in or before 1898 (including any matchlock, flintlock, percussion cap, or similar type of ignition system or replica thereof, whether actually manufactured before or after the year 1898) and also any firearm using fixed ammunition manufactured in or before 1898, for which ammunition is no longer manufactured in the United States and is not readily available in the ordinary channels of commercial trade.

(g) “Military firearm” means any military weapon, firearm, or destructive device, other than a machine gun, that is manufactured for military use by a firm licensed by the federal government pursuant to a contract with the federal government and does not include a pistol, rifle, or shotgun which fires only one shot for each pull of the trigger.

**SECTION 23‑31‑320.** Exceptions to application of article.

The provisions of this article shall not apply to the Army, Navy, or Air Force of the United States, the National Guard, and organizations authorized by law to purchase or receive machine guns, military firearms, or sawed‑off shotguns or sawed‑off rifles, from the United States or from this State and the members of such organizations. Any peace officer of the State or of any county or other political subdivision thereof, state constable, member of the highway patrol, railway policeman or warden, superintendent, head keeper or deputy of any state prison, penitentiary, workhouse, county jail, city jail, or other institution for the detention of persons convicted or accused of crime or held as witnesses in criminal cases or person on duty in the postal service of the United States or any common carrier while transporting direct to any police department, military, or naval organization or person authorized by law to possess or use a machine gun, or sawed‑off shotgun or sawed‑off rifle, may possess machine guns, or sawed‑off shotguns or sawed‑off rifles, when required in the performance of their duties. Nor shall the provisions hereof be construed to apply to machine guns, or sawed‑off shotguns or sawed‑off rifles, kept for display as relics and which are rendered harmless and not usable.

The provisions of this article shall not apply to any manufacturer of machine guns or military firearms licensed pursuant to the provisions of 18 U. S. C. Section 921 et seq., nor to any common or contract carrier transporting or shipping any machine guns or military firearms to or from such manufacturer if the transportation or shipment is not prohibited by federal law. Any such manufacturer shall furnish to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division the serial numbers of all machine guns or military firearms manufactured by it within thirty days of such manufacture and shall be subject to the penalties provided in Section 23‑31‑340 for noncompliance.

**SECTION 23‑31‑330.** Application and registration of person allowed to possess machine gun or sawed‑off shotgun or rifle.

(A) Every person permitted by Section 23‑31‑320 to possess a machine gun or sawed‑off shotgun or sawed‑off rifle, and any person elected or appointed to any office or position which entitles the person to possess a machine gun or sawed‑off shotgun or sawed‑off rifle, upon taking office, shall file with the State Law Enforcement Division on a blank to be supplied by the division on request an application which is properly sworn. The application must be approved by the sheriff of the county in which the applicant resides or has his principal place of business and include the applicant’s name, residence and business address, physical description, whether or not ever charged or convicted of any crime, municipal, state, or otherwise, and where, if charged, and when it was disposed of. The applicant shall also give a description including the serial number and make of the machine gun or sawed‑off shotgun or sawed‑off rifle which he possesses or desires to possess. The State Law Enforcement Division shall file the application in its office. The division shall register the applicant together with the information required in the application in a book or index to be kept for that purpose, assign to him a number, and issue to him a card which shall bear the signature of the applicant and which he shall keep with him while he has the machine gun or sawed‑off shotgun or sawed‑off rifle in his possession. This registration must be made on the date application is received and filed with the division. The registration expires on December thirty‑first of the year in which the license is issued.

(B) No permit or registration required by the provisions of this section is required where weapons are possessed by a governmental entity which has a significant public safety responsibility for the protection of life or property.

**SECTION 23‑31‑340.** Penalties.

A person who violates the provisions of this article is guilty of a felony and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than ten thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.

**SECTION 23‑31‑350.** Article not applicable to antique firearms.

The provisions of this article shall not apply to antique firearms.

**SECTION 23‑31‑360.** Unregistered possession of machine guns or military firearms by licensed manufacturer.

Machine guns or military firearms manufactured by a firm licensed by the federal government and subject to the Federal Gun Control Act may be legally possessed by the manufacturer without being registered with the State Law Enforcement Division. The manufacturing firm shall furnish to SLED the serial numbers of all machine guns or military firearms manufactured by it within thirty days of their manufacture and it is subject to the penalties provided in Section 23‑31‑340 for noncompliance.

**SECTION 23‑31‑370.** Special limited license for possession, transportation, and sale of machine guns; violations and penalties.

(a) The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division may issue a special limited license for the possession, transportation, and sale of machine guns in this State to persons: (1) who are authorized representatives of a machine gun manufacturer or dealer engaged in demonstrating and selling them to agencies authorized by law to possess them, or (2) who are engaged in professional movie‑making or providing services to professional movie‑makers who use machine guns as regulated by this article in the course of creating movie “special effects”.

(b) Applications for the special license authorized by this section must be on a form prescribed by the division, duly sworn to, containing the applicant’s name, business and residence address, a record of any criminal charges filed against the applicant in the United States for other than traffic law violations and the disposition of the charges, a description of the machine guns to be possessed, transported, or sold in this State, including their make and serial numbers, the sites within the State to which the machine guns will be transported, and such other information the division considers necessary to implement this section.

(c) The division may issue a special license pursuant to this section if it determines that the applicant has not been convicted of any offense other than traffic violations and the applicant clearly qualifies under item (1) or (2) of subsection (a). The special license is valid for a specified period not to exceed six months which must be stated on the license.

(d) Any person who knowingly and wilfully makes any false statement for the purpose of obtaining the special license or who violates its terms, in addition to any other penalty provided by law, is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not more than five thousand dollars or imprisoned for not more than two years, or both.

ARTICLE 6.

USING A FIREARM WHILE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL OR A CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE

**SECTION 23‑31‑400.** Definitions; unlawful use of firearm; violations.

(A) As used in this article:

(1) “Use a firearm” means to discharge a firearm.

(2) “Serious bodily injury” means a physical condition which creates a substantial risk of death, serious personal disfigurement, or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member or organ.

(B) It is unlawful for a person who is under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance to use a firearm in this State.

(C) A person who violates the provisions of subsection (B) is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined not less than two thousand dollars or imprisoned not more than two years.

(D) This article does not apply to persons lawfully defending themselves or their property.

**SECTION 23‑31‑410.** Blood and urine testing.

(A) A person who uses a firearm within this State shall submit to a SLED‑approved breath test to determine the alcoholic content of the blood and to a urine test to detect the presence of a controlled substance if there is probable cause to believe that the person was using a firearm while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance or if the person is arrested lawfully for an offense allegedly committed while he was using a firearm while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. The breath or urine test must be administered at the request of a law enforcement officer who has probable cause to believe the person was using the firearm while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance. The administration of either test shall not preclude the administration of the other test. The refusal to submit to a breath or urine test upon the request of a law enforcement officer pursuant to this section is admissible into evidence in a criminal proceeding.

(B) If the arresting officer does not request a breath or urine test of the person arrested for an offense allegedly committed while the person was using a firearm while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance, the person may request the arresting officer to have a breath test made to determine the alcohol content of the person’s blood or a urine test for the purpose of determining the presence of a controlled substance. The failure of the person who requests a breath or urine test to actually be so tested shall bar the prosecution of the person for using a firearm while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance.

(C) The provisions of Section 56‑5‑2950 relating to the administration of tests for determining the weight of alcohol in an individual’s blood, additional tests at the individual’s expense, availability of test information to the individual or the individual’s attorney, and liability of medical institutions and persons administering the tests are applicable to this section.

(D) The results of a test administered pursuant to this section for the purpose of detecting the presence of a controlled substance are not admissible as evidence in a criminal prosecution for the possession of a controlled substance.

(E) Information obtained pursuant to this section must be released to a court, prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, or law enforcement officer in connection with an alleged violation of Section 23‑31‑400 upon request for this information.

**SECTION 23‑31‑415.** Testing following death or serious personal injury; effect of refusal; evidentiary use.

(A) If a law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe that a person used a firearm while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance and caused the death or serious bodily injury of an individual, the person shall submit, upon the request of the law enforcement officer, to a test of his blood for the purpose of determining its alcohol content or for the presence of a controlled substance.

(B) A criminal charge resulting from the incident precipitating the officer’s demand for testing should be tried concurrently with a charge of a violation of Section 23‑31‑400. If the charges are tried separately, the fact that the person refused, resisted, obstructed, or opposed testing is admissible at the trial of the criminal offense which precipitated the demand for testing.

(C) The results of any test administered pursuant to this section for the purpose of detecting the presence of a controlled substance is not admissible as evidence in a criminal prosecution for the possession of a controlled substance.

Notwithstanding another provision of law pertaining to the confidentiality of hospital records or other medical records, information obtained pursuant to this section must be released to a court, prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, or law enforcement officer in connection with an alleged violation of Section 23‑31‑400 upon request for such information.

**SECTION 23‑31‑420.** Presumptions.

(A) Upon the trial of a civil or criminal action or proceeding arising out of acts alleged to have been committed by a person while using a firearm while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance, the results of any test administered pursuant to Section 23‑31‑410 or 23‑31‑415 and this section are admissible into evidence, and the amount of alcohol in the person’s blood at the time alleged, as shown by chemical analysis of the person’s blood or breath, creates the following presumptions:

(1) If there was at that time five one‑hundredths of one percent or less by weight of alcohol in the person’s blood, it must be presumed that the person was not under the influence of alcohol.

(2) If there was at that time in excess of five one‑hundredths of one percent but less than eight one‑hundredths of one percent by weight of alcohol in the person’s blood, this fact does not give rise to any inference that the person was or was not under the influence of alcohol to the extent that his normal faculties were impaired, but this fact may be considered with other competent evidence in determining whether the person was under the influence of alcohol.

(3) If there was at that time eight one‑hundredths of one percent or more by weight of alcohol in the person’s blood, this fact creates an inference that the person was under the influence of alcohol.

(B) The percent by weight of alcohol in the blood must be based upon grams of alcohol per one‑hundred milliliters of blood. The provisions of this section must not be construed as limiting the introduction of any other competent evidence bearing upon the question of whether the person was under the influence of alcohol.

ARTICLE 7.

LOCAL REGULATIONS

**SECTION 23‑31‑510.** Regulation of ownership, transfer, or possession of firearm or ammunition; discharge on landowner’s own property.

No governing body of any county, municipality, or other political subdivision in the State may enact or promulgate any regulation or ordinance that regulates or attempts to regulate:

(1) the transfer, ownership, possession, carrying, or transportation of firearms, ammunition, components of firearms, or any combination of these things; or

(2) a landowner discharging a firearm on the landowner’s property to protect the landowner’s family, employees, the general public, or the landowner’s property from animals that the landowner reasonably believes pose a direct threat or danger to the landowner’s property, people on the landowner’s property, or the general public. For purposes of this item, the landowner’s property must be a parcel of land comprised of at least twenty‑five contiguous acres. Any ordinance regulating the discharge of firearms that does not specifically provide for an exclusion pursuant to this item is unenforceable as it pertains to an incident described in this item; otherwise, the ordinance is enforceable.

**SECTION 23‑31‑520.** Power to regulate public use of firearms; confiscation of firearms or ammunition.

This article does not affect the authority of any county, municipality, or political subdivision to regulate the careless or negligent discharge or public brandishment of firearms, nor does it prevent the regulation of public brandishment of firearms during the times of or a demonstrated potential for insurrection, invasions, riots, or natural disasters. This article denies any county, municipality, or political subdivision the power to confiscate a firearm or ammunition unless incident to an arrest.

ARTICLE 8.

IDENTIFICATION CARDS ISSUED TO AND FIREARM QUALIFICATION PROVIDED FOR RETIRED LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

**SECTION 23‑31‑600.** Retired personnel; identification cards; qualification for carrying concealed weapon.

(A) For purposes of this section:

(1) “Identification card” is a photographic identification card complying with 18 U.S.C. Section 926C(d).

(2) “Qualified retired law enforcement officer” means any retired law enforcement officer as defined in 18 U.S.C. Section 926C(c) who at the time of his retirement was certified as a law enforcement officer in this State and who was trained and qualified to carry firearms in the performance of his duties.

(B) An agency or department within this State must comply with Section 3 of the Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act of 2004, 18 U.S.C. Section 926C, by issuing an identification card to any person who retired from that agency or department and who is a qualified retired law enforcement officer. If the agency or department currently issues credentials to active law enforcement officers, then the agency or department may comply with the requirements of this section by issuing the same credentials to retired law enforcement officers. If the same credentials are issued, then the agency or department must stamp the credentials with the word “RETIRED”.

(C)(1) Subject to the limitations of subsection (E), a qualified retired law enforcement officer may carry a concealed weapon in this State if he possesses an identification card issued pursuant to subsection (C) along with a certification that he has, not less recently than one year before the date the individual is carrying the firearm, met the standards established by the agency for training and qualification for active law enforcement officers to carry a firearm of the same type as the concealed firearm.

(2) The firearms certification required by this subsection may be reflected on the identification card or may be in a separate document carried with the identification card.

(D) The restrictions contained in Sections 23‑31‑220 and 23‑31‑225 are applicable to a person carrying a concealed weapon pursuant to this section.

(E) The agency or department may charge the retired law enforcement officer a reasonable fee for issuing the identification card and must provide the retired officer with the opportunity to qualify to carry a firearm under the same standards for training and qualification for active law enforcement officers to carry firearms. However, the agency or department, as provided in 18 U. S. C. Section 926C(c)(5), may require the retired officer to pay the actual expenses of the training and qualification.