

**Representative Keven J. Stratton** proposes the following substitute bill:

**RETURN OF WEAPONS RECOVERED BY LAW**

**ENFORCEMENT**

2013 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Keven J. Stratton**

Senate Sponsor: John L. Valentine

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This bill amends the procedures for the return or disposal of weapons recovered by law enforcement.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This bill:

- requires a law enforcement agency to return a firearm in its possession to the legal owner under certain requirements; and
- provides for a sworn declaration as acceptable evidence of ownership of property.

**Money Appropriated in this Bill:**

None

**Other Special Clauses:**

None

**Utah Code Sections Affected:**

AMENDS:

**77-24-2**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2012, Chapters 47 and 284

REPEALS:

**76-10-525**, as enacted by Laws of Utah 1973, Chapter 196



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*Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

Section 1. Section **77-24-2** is amended to read:

**77-24-2. Property not needed as evidence -- Child interview retention -- Return procedure -- Conflict resolution for secondhand merchandise.**

(1) Property which is not needed as evidence shall be returned to the owner, if the owner may lawfully possess it, or disposed of in accordance with this chapter.

(2) (a) When the peace officer or the officer's employing agency becomes aware that the property is not needed as evidence, the officer or the agency shall inform the prosecuting attorney that the property is not needed and provide a description and details of ownership.

(b) When the prosecuting attorney is informed or otherwise becomes aware that the property is not needed as evidence, the prosecuting attorney shall authorize release of the property to the owner.

(c) When the peace officer or the officer's employing agency becomes aware that any property is to be returned to its owner, the officer or employing agency shall exercise due diligence in attempting to notify the rightful owner that the property is to be returned.

(d) If the property is a weapon, the peace officer [~~shall dispose of it in accordance with Section 76-10-525.~~] or the peace officer's employing agency shall retain or dispose of a weapon pursuant to the agency's weapon disposal policy, if:

(i) the peace officer or the peace officer's employing agency is unable to determine the legal owner of the weapon;

(ii) the legal owner may not lawfully possess the weapon; or

(iii) the legal owner was convicted of a crime for which the weapon was used as evidence.

(e) (i) Upon proof of ownership and of lawfulness of possession satisfactory to the evidence custodian, the custodian shall release the property to the owner.

(ii) The evidence custodian shall accept a sworn declaration of ownership to establish ownership of the property.

~~(ii)~~ (iii) If the evidence custodian is unable to locate an owner of the property or if the owner is not entitled to lawfully possess the property, the agency having custody of the property shall dispose of the property in accordance with Section 77-24-4.

57           (f) If the property was seized from a pawnshop or a secondhand business, the  
58 procedure in Section 13-32a-109.5 shall be followed to return the property to the pawnshop or  
59 secondhand business.

60           (3) (a) When property is received in evidence, the clerk of the court last receiving it  
61 shall retain the property or the clerk shall return the property to the custody of the peace officer.  
62 The property shall be retained by the clerk or the officer until all direct appeals and retrials are  
63 final, at which time the property shall be returned to the owner in accordance with this chapter.  
64 If the property was seized for forfeiture, it shall be held and disposed of as provided in Title 24,  
65 Chapter 1, Utah Uniform Forfeiture Procedures Act.

66           (b) If the prosecuting attorney considers it necessary to retain control over the  
67 evidence, in anticipation of possible collateral attacks upon the judgment or for use in a  
68 potential prosecution, the prosecuting attorney may decline to authorize return of the property  
69 to the owner.

70           (4) If a peace officer or the officer's employing agency records an interview of a minor  
71 child during an investigation of a violation of Section 76-5-402.1, 76-5-402.3, 76-5-403.1, or  
72 76-5-404.1, the peace officer's employing agency shall retain a copy of the recording for 18  
73 years following the date of the last recording unless the prosecuting attorney requests in writing  
74 that the recording be retained for an additional period of time.

75           (5) If a conflict exists between the provisions of this section and Title 13, Chapter 32a,  
76 Pawnshop and Secondhand Merchandise Transaction Information Act, Title 13, Chapter 32a  
77 governs regarding disposition of property held by a pawn or secondhand business in the course  
78 of its business.

79           Section 2. **Repealer.**

80           This bill repeals:

81           Section **76-10-525, Disposition of weapons after use for court purposes.**