ELLSWORTH — Mainers worried about the possibility of President Obama restricting their access to firearms are flocking to gun shops to buy firearms, particularly handguns.

Contributing to the increase in gun purchases is LD 652, a 2015 law that allows Maine residents who are legally allowed to have firearms to carry concealed weapons without a permit.

Sales at shops in Ellsworth, Trenton and Holden were already skyrocketing months before President Obama’s announcement Tuesday proposing tighter...
and Obama taking away their rights. They're basically afraid.”

Jason York, manager at Willey's Sport Center in Ellsworth said “every time our commander-in-chief talks about restricting gun rights our sales go up 20 percent. It's been a very brisk business this fall.”

York attributes the steady sales to “fear of gun control.”

“We're probably selling more handguns than anything,” he said.

Mainers are worried about protecting themselves against crime, too, gun retailers said. Fear of crime locally, mainly due to drugs, and news of national and international terrorist attacks are factors in the increase in sales.

“People from New York coming up committing these murders, home invasions, they're scared,” Spizuoco said. “I think because of that, they're coming in for training as well.”

The story is the same over in Bucksport at Cool Hand Luke Firearms.

“Ever since the shooting in California, there's been a very large spike in gun sales,” said owner Luke Chiavelli.

Chiavelli said December was his busiest month of the year. However, December wasn’t his busiest month ever — that month was in 2008, the year Obama was elected.

Brian Stan, owner of Poseidon Firearms in Trenton, said his customers are thinking “I better arm myself because society is getting rougher.' Our society is becoming more lawless.”

Sales have increased at Poseidon too.

“Every time there’s a shooting, the administration starts talking about gun control, which drives more people to the gun shops.” Stan said. “I've seen sales increase, particularly on AR [automatic] rifles, and handguns — concealed carry small ones in particular.”

Stan expects the firearm business to stay strong. To that end, he's developing an indoor range next to his shop on Route 3.

Stan hopes to have the range up and running the summer of 2016.

Gun dealers and licensed teachers say that the new concealed carry law has led to a demand for training.

At Maine Military Supply, the staff of 15 is trained to ask prospective gun buyers lots of questions.
“With the passing of the LD 652 to being able to conceal carry as a non-licensing holder with the state — a lot of people said you’ll have all these yahoos carrying firearms that aren’t licensed to do it,” Ron Abbott said. “There’s actually more people seeking out classes because they can carry. People by heart are responsible and that was something I was glad to hear.”

“With the drug issues we’re having, that’s causing more people to be aware of it,” Abbott said. “They want to protect themselves in their own home.”

However, Dorathy Martel, executive director of The Next Step Domestic Violence Project said research has shown that women who have handguns for protection are more likely to get shot by those guns than defend themselves.

Chiavelli said many people don’t realize the commitment carrying a concealed weapon entails.

“You have to know what you’re doing and have that presence of mind to know where that gun is at all times,” Chiavelli said.

“Someone who doesn’t have that training and commitment, within a week, they’ll quit,” Chiavelli said. “It has to be comfortable. If it’s not comfortable when you put it on, you won’t wear it. If you don’t wear it, you won’t have it when you need it.”

As far as ammunition, “all the basic stuff is available, except for .22 and .22 mag,” Chiavelli said. “They just can’t keep up with the demand for it.”

John Bannister sells ammunition at his Blue Hill grocery, Merrill & Hinckley.

Bannister said ammunition went from $5 a box for some shells to $30 a box because of fear of restrictions.

“… If you can get ammunition, you don’t argue about the price,” Bannister said.

Merrill & Hinckley carries shotgun shells, pistol rounds and what Bannister calls “basic deer loads” such as 30/30 or 30.06.”

“It’s mostly whatever he happens to have,” Bannister said of his ammo dealer. “You take whatever you can get.”

Click here to read a White House statement on proposed gun measures
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