

## PISTOL CROSSBOWS

House Bill 4451 (Substitute H-1)  
First Analysis (5-26-93)

Sponsor: Rep. Jerry Vorva  
Committee: Judiciary

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

Recent months have seen the arrival and growing popularity of a seemingly new weapon: the pistol crossbow, a one-handed crossbow under two feet long that costs only \$20 and fires a metal dart using a reported 45 pounds of instantly-released force. Lightweight and silent, the weapon is said to be increasingly popular with drug dealers, as well as juveniles, who find the retail price well within their means. It appears to be quite easy for young teens to purchase the crossbows at retail outlets; kids appearing to be no more than fourteen have been seen to buy the weapons, and one Detroit-area television station enlisted a 13-year-old boy who was able to buy one no-questions-asked. That the weapons are potentially deadly is unquestioned; in fact, the weapon came to media attention after an anti-cruelty worker found a stray cat with a pistol crossbow dart penetrating four inches into its body. What is needed, many say, are restrictions on sales to minors and on the use and transport of pistol crossbows.

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend the Michigan Penal Code to ban sales of pistol crossbows to minors, prohibit minors from using them without parental supervision, and enact restrictions on transportation of pistol crossbows. (A "pistol crossbow" would be a crossbow designed to be fired using one or both hands without additional support.) The bill would take effect September 1, 1993.

**Sales to minors.** Selling a pistol crossbow to a minor would be a felony punishable by up to four years in prison, a fine of up to \$2,000, or both.

**Use by minors.** The bill would specify that a minor who transported or used a pistol crossbow without parental supervision would be guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by up to 90 days in jail, a fine of up to \$100, or both. The same penalties would apply to a minor's parent or guardian who

allowed the minor to use or transport a pistol crossbow without parental supervision.

**Transport.** To carry a pistol crossbow in a motor vehicle, the weapon would have to be unloaded and either taken down, enclosed in a case, carried in the trunk, or inaccessible from the interior of the vehicle. Violation of this transportation restriction would be a felony punishable by up to five years in prison, a fine of up to \$2,500, or both.

MCL 750.227 and 750.227g

### ***FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:***

There is no fiscal information at present. (5-25-93)

### ***ARGUMENTS:***

#### ***For:***

With its restrictions on pistol crossbows, the bill would outlaw sale of a dangerous weapon to minors and would forbid minors from using the weapon without parental supervision. Safety would be further promoted by enacting transportation requirements analogous to those in place for transporting guns; the crossbow would have to be unloaded and generally inaccessible to people in the vehicle.

#### ***Against:***

The crossbows appear to have no legitimate purpose, as they cannot be used for hunting. Perhaps it would be better to outlaw them entirely, or at least flatly forbid minors to possess them.

### ***POSITIONS:***

The Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan has no position on the bill. (5-25-93)

The Michigan United Conservation Clubs has no position on the bill. (5-26-93)