

Good evening & thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Valerie Harris and I live in the town of Wells.

I'm here tonight to represent the organization of Vermonters for the Second Amendment which has roughly over 2300 members; and to express our opposition to House Bill 735, specifically Section 20.

There are several reasons why we are against the passage of this bill - two of which are first it is unnecessary and second it is unconstitutional. By now, hopefully you have all had a chance to read the very impressive research compiled by Bob Depino on the statistics of domestic abuse in regards to firearms and other weapons within this state. Clearly that information dictates that this proposed legislation is unnecessary. However, if you decide to ignore that and continue, please consider these historical and constitutional ramifications:

The libertarian focus of the Vermont Constitution is found in its preamble: "Whereas all government ought to be instituted and supported for the security and protection of the community as such, and to enable the individuals who compose it to enjoy their natural rights ... (and so on)" Looking back over two centuries, because of the state of New York's claims to the lands of Vermont, what was then known as the New Hampshire Land Grants; and because of the violation of the New Yorkers unlawful claims on Vermont land by the invasions of "law enforcement", the driving force behind creating the Vermont Constitution was to provide the protections of Vermont citizen's rights to the utmost security of their lands and possessions.

This protective right solely expressed in Article 11, that invasion of a citizen's land or property by a law enforcement officer is prohibited - **IS AT THE VERY HEART OF THE PRESERVATION OF THE LIBERTY AND FREEDOM OF ITS CITIZENS GUARANTEED BY THE VERMONT CONSTITUTION !!** Article 11 protects the people, themselves, their houses, their papers, and **POSSESSIONS** against search & seizure as does the United States Constitution's 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Because a Vermonter's property and possessions are paramount, **ALL** must be free from invasion by the government absent a warrant. Understanding the legal term "first things first" we know Vermont Constitution's Article 11 affords us a greater protection than does the US Constitution's 4<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

Several years ago, the Vermont State Archeologist Giavonna Peebles said to me, "Valerie, above all, Vermonter's land rights are held sacred in this state" and I'm here tonight to say to you - so are their gun rights and their right to bear arms! If you allow for the passage of this bill, not only will it be unnecessary and unconstitutional, but you will turn back the hands of time and allow for the return of unwarranted search & seizure by law enforcement in this state. You will allow for the return of New Yorkers thinking once again they can come into this state and control it. If you allow for the passage of this bill, you will erase all those efforts of men like Ethan Allen, Seth Warner, Remember Baker, and James Breakenridge, to name just a few, who fought and defended these rights that we so dearly hold sacred today. If you allow for the passage of this bill, you will erase the memory of what Vermont stood for and has stood for, for all these years, for over 250 years; AND THAT is *Freedom and Liberty*.

In closing, we know and value that Vermont and its Constitution have been the first in the nation for many things - the first to abolish slavery, the first to provide voting rights for men who owned property, and the first to provide for public schools. We commend this Senate in passing House Bill 112 which, if enacted, will make Vermont the first in the nation to require labeling of GMOs. But please, do not be remembered as the Senate which passed and enacted a law, H.735, Sec. 20, THAT which violates and dismantles the very principles of *Freedom & Liberty* on which this state was founded.

Thank you very much.