

January 26, 2016

Dear Representatives of the Government Operations Committee,

My name is Ben Broe and I am a resident of Burlington. I am writing to ask that you say NO to H.566, H.567 & H.568; the Burlington firearm charter change bills, and not advance them any further.

The fundamental reason that these bills should not be advanced is because they are in direct violation of the Sportsmen's Bill of Rights (24 VSA 2245). The Sportsmen's Bill of Rights specifically states that the regulation of hunting, fishing and trapping or the possession, ownership, transportation, transfer, sale, purchase, carrying, licensing or registration of traps, firearms, ammunition or components of firearms or ammunition will be done at the State level and not by individual towns or cities. For this reason alone these bills should be thrown out immediately.

This is the second time in this legislative biennium that these charter change bills have been introduced. This time the wording has been changed a bit, but they are still in direct violation of The Sportsmen's Bill of Rights and are restrictive to Article 16 of the Vermont Constitution. Your committee already made the correct decision the first time around. Approving these bills would totally undermine the Sportsmen's Bill of Rights and would set a precedence for other municipalities to set their own laws concerning firearms, hunting and fishing. This could ultimately make innocent Vermont residents become criminals due to a complex patchwork of laws.

These bills are also an infringement on the constitutional rights of law abiding Vermonters. Article 16 specifically states the right of Vermonters to bear arms "for the defense of themselves and the state". These charter changes are restrictive to that constitutional right.

H.566, the "safe storage" bill, hinders a citizen to use arms for the core lawful purpose of self-defense in their own homes. How can citizens defend themselves from an armed intruder when they have to fumble for a key or punch in a code to retrieve their firearm in the middle of the night? The supposed purpose of this bill is to prevent an unauthorized person from obtaining access to the weapon. When really what it does is prevent a lawful gun owner from adequately having access to their weapon in order to defend themselves as granted by the constitution.

H.568, the "prohibiting possession of firearms on premises where alcohol is licensed to be served" bill, in effect creates "Gun Free Zones", which render law abiding citizens defenseless. Do you honestly think that an out of state, gang member, drug runner is going to abide by this law? Absolutely not. So now the law abiding citizen who carries a firearm for defense, as granted by the constitution, will be left defenseless. This bill states that a firearm cannot be possessed on premises where alcohol is licensed to be served. What about a citizen that may live in an apartment in the building of the

establishment. Does this mean they lose their constitutional right to defend themselves with a firearm in their own home?

H.567, the “police confiscation of dangerous weapons” bill, is flirting with infringement of the 4th amendment of the US constitution, dealing with illegal search and seizure. Also what is classified as a “Dangerous Weapon”?

I am confident that for all the reasons I have stated above your committee will once again make the right decision and say NO to these bills. Do not let Burlington “gut” the Sportsmen’s Bill of Rights.

Thank you for your time,
Ben Broe
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