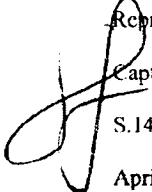




VERMONT POLICE ASSOCIATION

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TO: Representative Maxine Grad, Chair, House Judiciary Committee VIA E-MAIL
FROM:  Capt. Scott Tucker/ (Rutland City Police Department) on behalf of the Vermont Police Association
RE: S.141 – gun ownership
DATE: April 10, 2015

I'm sorry I wasn't able to attend your hearing on Tuesday afternoon, as I was invited to attend a meeting at the White House on the topic of "technology and data innovation for transparency and accountability in policing," which is a next step response to an Interim Report of The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, dated March 2015. Ordinarily, I am pleased to be heard in the House Judiciary Committee under your leadership. I would like you and your members to know that we are very interested in S. 141 and I would like to follow up on law enforcement testimony with a few thoughts of my own.

First, as chair of the VPA legislative committee, I can tell you that most police officers who have discussed the bill in detail are in full support of it. Even though it runs ten or so pages, there are only two principal themes which are now part of S.141.

1. The bill adds a new provision in state law to parallel existing federal law. That provision would allow the prosecution of convicted felons who are illegally possessing firearms through the state judicial system, using state prosecutors and state court judges.

We recognize that federal prosecutors are often very busy, and, sometimes decline to prosecute gun-related crimes. Without trying to solve that issue, or blaming others for non-prosecution, why not allow a similar state prosecution when the circumstances present themselves? Both the state's attorneys and police community support this provision, which seems pretty logical. I'm convinced it would make Vermont a safer place, and recommend passage of this provision.

2. The other main provision in the bill deals with the possession of firearms by persons who have been adjudicated as persons with mental health problems. These are people who could either harm themselves or others if they had access to firearms, and this is a provision which simply tries to keep these people and others a little safer.

Most states have adopted similar provisions to these, some doing so years ago. Quite frankly, we here in Vermont now have all the problems of the other 49 states, although not necessarily to the same degree. Simply put, these provisions would promote public safety, and we recommend their adoption.

In sum, S.141 is admittedly not a "cure-all" for all gun-related crimes. It is a modest step forward toward keeping Vermont and Vermonters a little safer, and we hope that you will support S.141 as it moves through the legislative process.

Please distribute this memo to your committee members, and thank you all for your consideration.

P.S. I understand you heard this from Chief Tony Facos, but it's worthy of repeating: The Vermont law enforcement community is not anti-gun. To the contrary, many of our members own private weapons and enjoy hunting and shooting, as well as the personal protection they provide, particularly in rural Vermont. The key is responsible gun ownership, by people who fully understand the parameters and responsibilities which go with gun ownership. At the end of the day, it's that simple.