



Gun Owners of Vermont

“The people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves and the state.”

— Article 16th of the Constitution of the State of Vermont

I would like to tell you what the Sportsmen’s Bill Of Rights has done for the members of the Gun Owners of Vermont and the citizens of this state.

In the late 1990s one of our members was on the way to the Rutland Gun show. At the time Rutland had an illegal firearm ordinance. He had stopped for gas, paid his bill when suddenly he was surrounded by the police. This gentleman and his girlfriend were doing nothing wrong and had no criminal record but someone had called the police and reported that he had a side arm. The police disarmed, searched him, his girlfriend and their car. After they and the car were searched his girlfriend reached into the car to get a cigarette and one of the officers drew his gun and told her to stop. That in itself was the most dangerous thing that could have happened. She might have been shot. After detaining the two people for over a half hour the police told them to “get out of town and not to come back”. He told us about it and we set up a meeting with our attorney and she filed a case against Rutland. Because of the Sportsmen’s Bill Of Rights we were able to prevail and the city had to drop their illegal ordinance.

We then had a similar illegal ordinance overturned in Montpelier.

A few years ago Vernon passed an ordinance because a land owner and some friends were shooting in his sand pit. They had been doing this for years as this sand pit is a very safe place to shoot. The owner, fire chief, officers and a gunsmith were the ones target shooting. We contacted the 1st Selectman and discussed this at a select board meeting. They dropped the ordinance without complaint. Only one person complained about the noise originally and there have been no complaints since then.

The last one we were involved with was Townsend. In that instance the select board made it illegal to have a firearm on any town property. This was because the town constable was carrying a firearm on town property. We again contacted the 1st Selectman and went to a selectman's meeting. We were told that we would be heard at 7:30. When we got there the ordinance had already been overturned.

Because of the Sportsmen’s Bill Of Rights we were able to right these unjust, unconstitutional, and illegal ordinances.

Because of the Sportsmen’s Bill Of Rights we have saved the state of Vermont hundreds of thousands of dollars in court costs and protected the Constitutional Rights of all Vermonters.

We have had two Supreme Court decisions already on this issue. The first is the State versus Rosenthal, where the court said that limiting a person under Article 16th was repugnant to the Constitution. The second was in the recent case of Berlin Pond, where Montpelier was trying to lay claim to a property not even in its jurisdiction. In this case the Sportsmen’s Bill Of Rights directly helped the decision.

All three of the newly reworded Burlington Charter Changes are STILL in violation of the Vermont Constitution, the Sportsmen’s Bill Of Rights, and Burlington’s own Town Charter.

I urge you to vote “NO” on these charter changes and send the clear message that NO town has the authority to violate the Constitutional Rights of Vermonters.

Ed Cutler
President, Gun Owners of Vermont