



**Testimony on H. 422  
Removal of Weapons at Scene of a Domestic Violence Incident  
House Committee on Judiciary  
March 1st, 2017**

**Ann Braden, President of GunSenseVT**

Thank you for hearing my testimony in support of H. 422. Through my leadership of GunSenseVT, I have met women who are survivors of domestic violence and have been either shot by a gun and/or threatened by a gun by their abusive partner. In one case, the shooting survivor was a child who was shot by an abusive stepfather who beat her mother weekly. One of the things that we don't often talk about is the children who are also at risk when there's a gun present in domestic violence households. The trauma caused by domestic violence in conjunction with a weapon has had a lasting impact on them, a fear that is so strong it makes their right to happiness non-existent. They will always live with post-traumatic stress disorder. They struggle with anxiety and depression and profound expressions of loss and grief.

When people are forced into situations of intimidation and face threats of violence, it is our society's responsibility to stand with them and protect them as much as we can. By the time law enforcement has had to intervene, the balance of power in an abusive relationship is usually so out of whack that we can't afford to turn a blind eye and ignore the danger the victim is in. Temporarily disarming someone who has just been arrested or cited for domestic abuse makes sense. It helps to restore the balance of power and protect the lives of everyone involved.

Right now the state of Vermont doesn't do enough to protect its domestic violence victims. It's time we join the eighteen states that allow for an abuser to be disarmed at the scene of a domestic incident – including New Hampshire, whose legislation reads:

*When a peace officer has probable cause that a person has been abused, the officer shall use reasonable means to prevent further abuse including seizing any weapons involved in the alleged domestic abuse and any firearms/ammunition in the defendant's ownership.*

GunSenseVT's mission is to keep guns out of the wrong hands, and this bill is designed to do that. We're proud to be in support.