



THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT  
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**The Rt. Rev. Thomas C. Ely**  
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February 19, 2018

Senator Dick Sears, Chair  
State of Vermont, Senate Committee on Judiciary  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

Dear Senator Sears,

I write as a private citizen, as the Episcopal Bishop of Vermont, and as a member of Bishops United Against Gun Violence<sup>i</sup> to register my strong support of **S.221 Extreme Risk Protection Order** and to urge you and your colleagues on the Judiciary Committee to vote this bill out of committee with your unanimous positive recommendation and send it to the full Senate for prompt debate and action.

Even before the most recent mass school shooting in Florida, this bill offered a clear, focused and common-sense tool to assist law enforcement, and to offer a degree of protection to all citizens. It now seems even more urgent. To be sure, no single law can eliminate the risk and potential of the sort of gun violence we witnessed in Florida last week, and in the many similar instances of mass shootings in American schools. And yet, this legislation is something that can be accomplished and has ample safeguards for the protection of second amendment rights.

Of particular interest to me is the fact that this bill addresses not only those who may pose a significant danger to others, such as in cases of domestic violence, but also to themselves. According to the most recent statistics from the Center for Disease Control one half of all completed suicides in 2014 involved firearms (21,386 of 42,826).<sup>ii</sup> A more comprehensive study of the relationship of firearms to suicide is contained in a 2016 report from the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence.<sup>iii</sup> That report includes a chart of statistics by state. From 2010 to 2014 there were 304 deaths by suicide in Vermont. Of those 89.9% involved firearms. Family members and law enforcement are often in the best position to see the warning signs of violence and S.221 will give them a tool to prevent a tragedy before it happens.

While the focus of this letter is on S.221, I also want to take this opportunity to indicate my support for S.6 and H.422. Thank you for your service to the people of Vermont. Please take prompt and positive action on S.221. Lives are on the line.

Sincerely yours,

The Right Reverend Thomas C. Ely

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.diovermont.org/post.php?p=9114>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/suicide.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.bradiycampaign.org/sites/default/files/Brady-Guns-Suicide-Report-2016.pdf>

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