

The Gun Owners of Vermont Inc.
PO Box 45
Saxtons River, VT 05154
(802) 463-9026



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I'm Ed Cutler the president of the Gun Owners of Vermont.

I am here representing our thousands of members to oppose ALL legislation that infringes on Vermont's firearm ownership, including S.6, H.422 and S.221 and anything that will be proposed in the next week.

From what we're hearing from people in this building, the anti-gun forces are making a desperate attempt to pass **everything** they can before Crossover. **Everything**. We are not sure whether these new proposals will be brought down on the floor as amendments or as separate bills.

We at Gun Owners of Vermont are as heartbroken and sympathetic as anyone else in regard to the tragedy that happened in Florida last week.

For YEARS, the Article 16 Community have been saying “**Enforce the laws already on the books.**”

The current laws and procedures in Vermont work.

We do not need **more** laws to achieve the **same** results.

I remember just last Thursday, that Chief Jennifer Morrison, testified that law enforcement already has laws in place to handle any kind of violent situation.

This was proven by what happened in Fair Haven.

Our appreciation goes out to Vermont law enforcement for their immediate response in thwarting what might have been a terrible tragedy.

Vermont law enforcement have done excellent work with existing law, while the FBI failed to do the same with superior resources and manpower.

No one in this room wants violence of any kind to occur, but this bill is a solution in search of a problem and will not prevent violence.

Instead of looking at the good and honest people of this state as “future criminals”, this committee should be looking into the root cause of the violence and reducing it.

Some suggestions are:

1. Arming and training school personnel who volunteer to actively protect our children, we have firearm instructors that will train these folks at NO COST. If the volunteer does not personally own a firearm, we have FFLs who will DONATE firearms to this program.

If you stop to think about this, if a tragedy like this should occur in Vermont, the average police response time is twenty minutes. School personnel are on site for immediate response while law enforcement on route.

Since all these school shootings are premeditated, the simple fact that a school is ready to actively defend our children will have a chilling effect on these insidious plans.

2. The Gun Free Zone prohibition is a beacon to those individuals with ill-intent. When a person with evil in his heart knows that he will meet ABSOLUTELY NO RESISTANCE to a planned attack, they are emboldened.

These Gun Free Zones were created in 1990 at the same time as the “Assault Weapon Ban” hysteria.

In the 226 years BEFORE Gun Free School Zones, there were **NINE** School Shootings.

In the 28 years AFTER the mandating of Gun Free Zones there have been **FIFTEEN** School Shootings.

One would have to be blind to not acknowledge the correlation.

Add to that the 24/7 media coverage and you have a recipe for an evil person’s “fifteen minutes of fame.”

It has been proven that most school shooters are “copycats” trying to outdo the last one.

THIS HAS TO STOP.

We have to remove the temptation of a target-rich environment with no defenses.

According to an article in Vermont Center for Community Journalism by Andrew Whalen, published on October 18, 2017, he stated; “Over the past two decades, rates of domestic violence against females have fallen by almost 75%.”

Yes 75%.

These numbers were provided by the Umbrella Organization in St. Johnsbury.

They have a proven system in the Vermont tradition of friend helping friend. I would suggest this as the model to follow, instead of trying to remove someone's constitutional rights under Article 16th.

According to a report submitted to this committee, 585 people had their names turned over to the NICS system since Act 191 was enacted in 2014. Not one of those people have petitioned the courts to have their constitutional rights restored. The reason for this is quite simple. The smartest thing to do in cases like this is to have an attorney represent you. We checked with some attorneys and they will not take a case like this without a minimum retainer of \$2,000. I ask any lawyer in this room. Would **you** represent anyone without being paid?

We respectfully ask, that a Public Defender should be assigned, to assist in restoration of their Constitutional rights if they cannot afford one.

We looked at all the domestic violence murders in this state over the past few years and here is what we found.

In 2017, there were 7 domestic violence murders, of those only ONE was by a firearm and SIX were by **knife** or **strangulation**.

In 2016, there were 6 total domestic violence murders. Three were by firearm and 3 by other means.

I can go on and on with these but this committee can, and should, get the info from our own VCIC, law enforcement agencies or the FBI Uniform Crime Report.

You have heard “statistics” from members of the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission of the high presence of firearms in households.

The mere ownership of a firearm in a domestic incident does NOT mean that it is going to be used.

As a matter of fact, if what they were saying were true, the number of domestic violence murders by firearm in Vermont would be staggering. In 2017 there was ONE.

According to the latest census report approximately 300,000 men, women, and children in this state live peacefully with one or more firearms in their homes. We think this number is low considering there are **millions** of firearms in this state. Now some legislators in this building and some AstroTurf organizations in this state influenced by people like Chicago activist, Bob Williamson, and billionaires like Michael Bloomberg, tell the public this as a bad thing. 93% of the general public and everyone in my organization are proud of the safe and responsible ownership of all those firearms.

On January 30th approximately 1250 pro-gun Vermonters filled this building on a weekday night because **they do not want to this, nor ANY other anti-gun bills to move forward.**

The activists for additional gun control consisted of members of **three** nationally-funded anti-gun organizations and over a dozen domestic violence groups, and their combined turnout was less than 100. Many of them were bused in from out of state through three Vermont border towns.

I am sure you will be hearing from some people in this building that the attendance was because we are more organized. This is not true.

We showed up because we care about this issue. We are not being funded by an out of state billionaire like they are and **no one on our side is being paid to do this.** We are doing this because we cherish the proud traditions of our state and respect the rights of our fellow Vermonters.

Although some of the testimony you heard is indeed tragic, and I, like anyone with a heart, feel for them and their families.

However, only **two** happened in Vermont.

Many of these events go back 40 years and occurred across the nation in Alaska, Arizona, and other unspecified locations, and **should not** be used to influence Vermont politics.

Vermont has the **LOWEST** number of violent crimes in the nation, so crimes in other places do not correlate to our state, nor to this period in time.

As a matter of fact, keep in mind the violent crime rate has dropped in Vermont by 40% over the last two decades.

I have already supplied you with a number of voluntary public polls and all of them reflect what the people of this state and country really think. They average 90% against gun control with an average of 100,000 responses. You also have a large response from the e-mail you set up for this issue. Please enter them into the permanent record as these were submitted by people who actually live here.

I am including an article by Jacob Sullum, a Cornell University graduate, who majored in economics and psychology, regarding “mental illness prohibitions.” This article coincides with what we have learned through our Vermont Gun Shop Project. While the actual numbers of people with mental illness becoming violent is statistically low, ostracizing these folks, will prevent them from seeking counselling.

I am also including this link to a Reason.com article by Steve Chapman.
<https://reason.com/archives/2018/02/18/a-cure-for-mass-shootings-doesnt-exist>

Steve explains that the Constitution of the United States was NOT designed to give the government supreme power over the law of the land without an overwhelmingly “clear and durable” public consensus. There is no clear consensus FOR gun control in Vermont.

Media articles and news coverage plaster the “we have to do something” message ten times a day.

The public were given an opportunity to voice their opinion on the subject on January 30th.

The attendance was 10 to 1 AGAINST ALL GUN CONTROL IN VERMONT.

Why are we still discussing this?

Testimony from Dr. Christopher Barsotti, an **advisory board member** for the *National Medical Council on Gun Violence*, who testified in the House Health & Welfare Committee that he had treated more gunshot wounds in **Bennington** than he ever did as an ER Trauma Physician in **Chicago!**

Please do not fall for the half-truths, fake studies and cherry-picked statistics that were bought and paid for by an out of state billionaire and the never-ending barrage of divisive anti-gun rhetoric from the media.

Vermonters came to the capitol when you asked for their opinions. The answer was “No.”

For some reason they are getting another chance, and another...

The current laws and procedures in Vermont work.
We do not need **more** laws to achieve the **same** results.
We don’t need more laws because “we have to do something.”

Listen to the people of Vermont who have already spoken.

Respectfully,
Ed Cutler
President, Gun Owners of Vermont
eddie.cutler@yahoo.com
802-463-9026