

MEMBERS OF HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
MEMBERS OF SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE  
ORANGE-1 DELEGATION  
11 APRIL 2019

I was unable to attend the meeting on 27 MARCH 2019, but would like to offer some thoughts and testimony on proposed issues that concern firearms. However, I believe any points made will fall on deaf ears as it is my feeling these “open meetings” are for show only as minds are already made up prior, as indicated by the actions of the last session (2017-2018).

With regards to S-169 covered by T-13 VSA 4019, (background checks) 4021, (magazines) 4057, and 4062, (reporting) improvements have been made but there is still room for additional improvement, VSA 4019a (handgun waiting period and transfers) serves no purpose other than to place undue inconvenience, time, and cost for law abiding individuals. I know this action in the results of a very unfortunate tragedy involving a young man in his early 20's from Essex, who committed suicide with a recently purchased handgun. The concept, of waiting periods, is nothing new. I am sure that in the hearts of his family they feel that a waiting period of several hours would have had a different ending. No one will ever know for sure.

While doing some research I have found that in the last 20 (+/-) years there have been 3 or 4 similar incidents whereby individuals have taken their lives with a firearm somewhat soon after the purchase. I can only speak of and refer to suicides I investigated during my 11 years in law enforcement. No suicide by gun was committed with a recently purchased firearm. I can state that no matter the means of suicide whether by firearm, CO, overdose, strangulation, vehicle, train, knife, attempted suicide by cop, etc., the majority or all were spontaneous, and few if any left suicide notes. When interviewing relatives, friends, witnesses, (if any) very few could provide information that indicated the individuals provided any signs or signals that suicide was being contemplated.

The following suicide, which I will describe as brief as I can, does not involve a firearm, but details the intent and degree someone will go through to carry out the act when determined. This all took place within a few hours. Attempt #1: Individual intended to drive vehicle at a high rate of speed into a power pole & tree. The attempt did not work as it was winter and some fresh plowed snow caused the vehicle to sink into the snow

losing momentum and not go airborne as planned. Attempt #2: Upon this failure, the individual heard a train whistle and realizing the train was approaching spun vehicle out of snow bank and drove a short distance to an unmarked RR crossing in view of the approaching train. The individual tried to drive in front of the moving train. However, the operator accelerated too fast and crossed the RR tracks before any contact with the train. Attempt #3 was successful. The individual went home,

retrieved an encyclopedia opened to a section showing anatomy of the human chest and abdomen, removed coat and shirt; the book was propped up behind faucets of bathroom sink. While leaning over the bathroom sink the individual shoved a sharp knife into the chest just below the xiphoid process inflicting damage to liver, heart, and part of a lung; at this point the individual turned to let his/her body fall over the edge of the bath tub to bleed out into the tub. When individuals plan their demise and keep those thoughts to themselves, a waiting period whether 72 hours or 24 hours will not matter.

The point is, punishing law-abiding gun owners for the acts of criminals and widespread failings of government agencies at the state and federal level is wrong. It will not solve any of the behavioral problems or mental health issues that we desperately need to address. Whether the bills are S.-1, S.-2, S.-3, S-13, S-22, or S-169, they are all a band-aid approach to a problem that does not exist and is in direct conflict with Article 16 of the Vermont Constitution: “Article 16 That the people have a right to bear arms for the defence of themselves and the State”.

Today’s unpredictable, crisis-driven, and largely online public discourse can quickly create enormous momentum behind ill-conceived efforts before rational thought has a chance to intercede. Gun control activists count on this, and will be biding their time to unleash their campaigns whenever possible. These ill-conceived efforts are primarily supported and pushed by Democrats and Progressives, and the “news media”. These organizations by whatever names

they go by are well organized and funded with out of state money from billionaires like Michael Bloomberg, George Soros, and others. The Gun Control Act of 1968 signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, banning mail order sales of rifles and shotguns and prohibiting most felons, drug users and people found mentally incompetent from buying guns, the Brady Bill of 1993 etc. were supposed to be the answer to all crimes involving guns. They have done nothing, but create undue inconvenience for law-abiding citizens as criminals and those with mental illness could care less about laws. These anti-gun groups are using school age kids who have been exposed to unconscionable acts of violence for their own gain by convincing them that any hunter, gun owner, target shooter, NRA member, and the NRA and other sporting groups are deranged terrorists, which is a bold face lie.

Common sense dictates we do not have a problem with “GUN VIOLENCE” but we do with “PEOPLE VIOLENCE”. A firearm is nothing more than an inert object, as is a vehicle, bicycle, or a hammer. None are capable of independent action until initiated by a human being. I cannot recall of issuing a VTC to a motor vehicle for a violation, but I did issue many to the OPERATOR who committed the violation.

Please support and focus on legislation that will protect our schools and fix our broken mental health system. I believe having marksmanship programs (or more of them) in schools would be a step in the right direction; and besides teaching marksmanship and safe handling, the classes might mold some new hunters. Speaking of which brings the Sawyer incident of last year to mind. When the Governor’s office provided me with a copy of the Information and Affidavit charging him I responded that there would be problems following the arraignment, which there was. Had I been the officer I would not have signed that affidavit for the charges indicated.

As a hunter, gun owner, and former police officer I urge you to oppose S-169 and any further gun control measures. I will consider your response and any votes the next time I vote

Again, please oppose S.169 along with any other unnecessary gun control measures. Support issues that address PEOPLE BEHAVIORAL ISSUES and demand that courts apply the full extent of laws on the books prior to the passage of unnecessary “gun control” measures such as

those signed into law last session. Also, as a former LEO support the police by not placing needless restraints and workload on law enforcement and avoid draconian “laws”.

Sincerely,

George A. Thomson JR.

MSG USA (RET)