



S.169 - Firearm Sales Waiting Period
Sarah Robinson, Deputy Director
House Judiciary Committee - March 28th, 2019

Thank you for taking testimony this morning on S. 169, which makes several important changes to firearms statutes in Vermont. The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is Vermont's leading voice on domestic and sexual violence in our state. We represent 15 Member Organizations throughout the state which provide advocacy and support to victims of domestic and sexual violence. Together, these organizations served 8,550 individuals last year in Vermont. On behalf of our members and the victims they serve, the Vermont Network strongly supports S. 169 – most importantly the provision establishing a waiting period for firearm transfers in Vermont. Though the bill you are considering today proposes a 24-hour waiting period on hand gun transfers, we fully support language previously proposed in H. 159 which would establish a 72-hour waiting period on all firearms transfers.

There is a deadly relationship between firearms and domestic violence. Firearms are often used to threaten or intimidate victims, and research indicates that firearms are the most frequently used weapons in domestic violence homicides.¹ Vermont is not immune to this reality. Over half of all homicides in Vermont are domestic violence related. Of those homicides, 55% have been committed with firearms. In cases of murder-suicides, the relationship to firearms is even more stark. Of the domestic violence related murder-suicides committed in Vermont, 77% were committed with firearms.²

Contrary to common misperceptions, access to firearms does not increase victim safety – in fact, proximity to firearms increases the risk of lethality for victims of domestic violence. Firearms are rarely used for self-defense in violent crimes such as domestic violence. Based on an analysis of FBI data from 2007-2011, victims of violent crime engaged in self-protective behaviors that involved a firearm in less than 1% of cases³. In fact, when firearms are present in a home (whether owned by an abusive partner or by a victim), a victim of domestic violence is six times more likely to be killed. According to a study conducted by the Violence Policy Center, women are far more likely to be killed than to use a firearm in a justifiable homicide. For every one time a woman used a handgun to kill someone in self-defense, 83 women were murdered by their intimate partner with a firearm.⁴

In recent years, this committee has considered many options to address the deadly relationship between firearms and domestic violence. While S. 169 will surely provide critical safety to victims,

¹ Cooper, A., & Smith, E. (2011, November). Homicide Trends In The United States, 1980-2008. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics

² Vermont Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission Report, 2018

³ Violence Policy Center. (2013, April). Firearm Justifiable Homicides and Non-Fatal Self-Defense Gun Use: An Analysis of Federal Bureau of Investigation and National Crime Victimization Survey Data. Washington, DC

⁴ Violence Policy Center. (2001). A Deadly Myth: Women, Handguns, and Self-Defense. Washington, DC.



significant gaps remain which leave victims vulnerable to firearm violence at the most dangerous times. Another bill introduced this year, H. 30, would remove firearms as a result of the temporary and final relief from abuse order process. We are not requesting that the committee insert any language from H. 30 into the bill you are discussing and deliberating today. However, we do feel that the removal of firearms in the civil protection order process is an important and unaddressed gap which remains, in part, due to questions as to how and where to store confiscated firearms. We look forward to working with the committee on this issue and many others in the future.

Domestic violence related homicides forever change the lives of surviving family members and the communities in which they occur. S. 169 is one way to reduce the likelihood of these impulsive acts of devastating violence. We thank the committee for your consideration, and for all of your efforts to advance policies that increase safety for victims of crime.