

The Gun Owners of Vermont Inc.
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First, we would like to commend Senator John Rodgers for introducing fixes to the unconstitutional magazine ban. However, we cannot support his bills due to the possibility of added dangerous amendments that may alter the original intent of his legislation. We have confidence The Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs' litigation will prevail to correct this travesty. We formally request that these bills be put on hold pending an outcome of the litigation.

There has been quite a bit of misinformation put out by GunSense Vermont and Moms Demand Action, two anti-gun organizations operating within Vermont. These groups are funded and controlled by billionaire Michael Bloomberg.

According to these groups:

1) Vermont is an extremely dangerous place to live, citing its high firearm homicide rate.

FACT: Homicide is not necessarily murder. According to the FBI Uniform Crime Report, the average firearm murder rate has gone down over the last twenty years in Vermont, now averaging 3 a year. "Homicides" includes police shootings, self-defense, and accidental shootings.

FACT: Vermont has the lowest firearms murder rate in the country and one of the lowest in the world. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTYzyHjLDz8>. For instance, in 2012, VPR reported there were 7 reported homicides. Breaking them down, two were from police shootings, one was an accidental discharge, another was a defensive use of a gun, one originated outside of Vermont...Crown Point, New York. That left only two actual murders in 2012. Yet, anti-gun organizations continue to mislead by cherry-picking statistics to further their agenda. In 2016, there were a reported 7 homicides as well. However, the actual breakdown shows that two of those were from police shootings, one accidental discharge, one from defensive gun use. That left only three actual murders in 2016.

2) Gun Sense is now pushing for a waiting period to purchase a firearm in order to accomplish a "cooling off" period for a suicidal individual.

FACT: In the last twenty years there have been only three instances of people walking into a gun store, purchasing a firearm, and taking their life shortly thereafter. In one of those instances, the person took their life two days after they bought the firearm.

FACT: A waiting period can be very dangerous. If a woman is being stalked by an abusive husband (or any stalker) a waiting period could mean the difference between life and death. According to The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, "the most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence is when she or he takes steps to leave the relationship." One should not be required to wait days in order to protect themselves by the best means possible.

FACT: You may also need to have a firearm for protection from rabid animals which are on the increase in Vermont. Rabid animals can be an immediate threat while the average response time from a warden or police is a half hour.

FACT: Two-thirds of gun owners own more than one gun. A cooling-off period for these gun owners could not possibly have an effect as they already own other firearms. Anecdotal evidence about a person who purchases a firearm and then immediately uses it to harm themselves or somebody else are just that: anecdotal. There is no scientific evidence that waiting periods, no matter the span of time, have an effect on suicide, homicide, or mass shootings.

FACT: Waiting periods, as well as the newly enacted Act 94 background checks, have and will sabotage the successful program lead by The Gun Owners of Vermont and The Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs. The *Vermont Gun Shop Project*, as it is called, encourages an individual who is contemplating suicide with a firearm, to voluntarily transfer their firearms to a trusted individual. This trusted individual will hold the firearm until the gun owner feels he or she can safely retake possession of their property. But, this program depends on spur-of-the-moment interaction between the parties. Both waiting periods and background checks have effectively destroyed this interaction, which are time-sensitive.

3) Last year Universal Background Checks were passed into law in no small part by lobbying efforts by GunSense Vermont. More than just an inconvenience, UBCs have proven detrimental to an existing successful suicide prevention program.

FACT: The Gun Owners of Vermont and The Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs are leaders in a successful suicide prevention program. Known as The Vermont Gun Shop Project, this program encourages an individual who is contemplating suicide with a firearm, to voluntarily transfer their firearms to a trusted individual. This trusted individual will hold the firearm up to a period of time that the gun owner feels he or she can safely retake possession of their property. But, this program depends on spur-of-the-moment interaction between the parties. Background checks, as well as waiting periods, have effectively destroyed this interaction, which is time-sensitive. The Vermont Gun Shop Project took advantage of the crucial existing trust between the parties to encourage participation. The Gun Owners of Vermont offered this service free of cost. Because of now having UBCs who knows how many people could have been saved by having the option of transferring their guns to a safe party.

FACT: Many people, even though suicidal, do not want to relinquish their firearms. When reaching out for help they want them to be stored in a safe place. Now, due to UBCs, all firearms must be transferred through an FFL dealer with two fees for each firearm and a paperwork trail that takes an exorbitant amount of time. In order to give a trusted person a firearm and then get it back is \$40.00. Ten guns is \$400.00, etc.

Vermont has had generations of parents teaching their children how to handle all kinds of firearms for the purpose of hunting, target shooting, and personal safety. It is a Vermont tradition. We need to continue this tradition instead of instilling fear into our kids by marketing firearms as a scary object never to be handled. The next generation of young Vermonters should continue to be schooled in the proper handling and safe use of firearms and not be taught fear and loathing of an inanimate object that could very well save their life someday. Our young Vermonters need the opportunity to have the choice of using firearms as a positive ideal and not be brainwashed to believe otherwise.

For more information visit our website, www.gunownersofvermont.org or contact The Gun Owners of Vermont, 802 463 9026, or gunownersofvermont@gmail.com .

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