

**VTFSC Testimony on S.281, H.5 Amendment**  
**May 5, 2022 – House Judiciary Committee**  
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My name is Chris Bradley, and I am the President & Executive Director of the Vermont Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

I begin by stating that the Federation strongly supports S.281 and we feel that this bill must pass.

I address this testimony only to the new amendment under consideration concerning suppressors, previously known as H.5, as well as to address any consideration of an alternative amendment that might advocate for further study of the suppressors in Vermont.

Firearm suppressors first became regulated with the National Firearms Act (NFA) of 1934. Prior to that you could buy a suppressor at your local hardware store or through Sears by mail order.

An initial thing to know about suppressors is that they are not a "one-size-fits-all" sort of thing. Suppressors are specific to the caliber of the firearm. So, a non-integral .22 suppressor can be swapped between different suppressor-ready .22s – but it would only work for those .22s. If you had several different firearms of different calibers you wanted to suppress, you would need a suppressor for each caliber.

Another consideration with suppressors: We need to understand that these are not cheap. Inexpensive suppressors start at about \$225; an average one runs about \$500, and they can go up to \$2,000. To most Vermonters, that is a non-trivial investment.

Another thing: Each suppressor bought requires a \$200 transfer fee (tax stamp) that is paid to the BATF.

So, for between \$425 - \$700, a suppressor can be bought. However, in most cases that does not mean they can be immediately used. To work properly and effectively: Suppressors need to be precisely attached to the barrel of the firearm, and that typically means the firearm must have a "threaded barrel", or threads at the end of the barrel where the front sight typically is. The suppressor can then be screwed onto the barrel.

Very few hunting firearms come with threaded barrels. New firearms can be purchased with integral suppressors or with threaded barrels; or a gunsmith can remove an old barrel and replace it with a new threaded one; or an existing barrel can be threaded by a gunsmith. All of that involves more money, in addition to time.

With the suppressor purchased (bought, but not yet possessed), an individual purchaser begins their approval process by filling out ATF Forms 4 and 5330.20, getting fingerprinted, and then having passport-quality photos taken. All that gets sent to the BATF, along with the \$200 transfer fee per suppressor. The BATF then conducts an extensive background check with further review by the FBI, with typical BATF response times being at best a few months but usually much longer. If approved:

Then and only then can a Vermonter actually possess that suppressor, and as part of that approval the purchaser's Chief Law Enforcement Officer (CLEO) is notified of the transfer.

Concerns over allowing the use of suppressors for hunting appears to not fully consider exactly who it is that would legally be allowed to buy a silencer for hunting use.

These are Vermonters that can pass an extremely rigorous background check that must prove them to be honest and law-abiding citizens.

These are people who are willing to submit their fingerprints to Federal Authorities for entry into a Federal Fingerprint database (this does not occur with a regular Background Check).

These are people who are willing to have their name on a Federal NFA Register, essentially putting a flag over their head that says they own a highly-regulated, and usually fairly expensive, NFA item.

These people are NOT criminals; they are about as far from criminals as you can get. Why are we worried about them given the hoops that must be jumped through, the money that must be spent, and the many months of time between purchase and actual possession?

Which brings me to any consideration for some sort of impact study. Suppressors are legal in Vermont, they have been for almost 7 years, and there is not one instance in Vermont that we are aware of where a suppressor was used in any Vermont crime, civil or criminal. We just cannot see any justification for further study that years' worth of real-world experience has not already shown us.

The F&W Department supports this amendment. This amendment has the very positive effect of helping to protect the hearing of hunters, and it has the very real potential of reducing noise complaints and related investigation when that noise is from the legitimate discharge of a firearm while hunting.

Suppressors are legal to own in 42 states. Of those, they can be used in hunting in all but 2, with Vermont being one of those 2.

Vermont has a history of leading. The VTFSC supports this amendment, and we ask that this be approved with all due speed.

Thank You