



MEMO

TO: Members, Senate Judiciary Committee
FROM: Karen Horn, Director, Public Policy & Advocacy
RE: S. 30 Possession of Firearms at Certain Locations
DATE: January 27, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on S.30.

The Board of Directors of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns supports the intent of S.30 to prohibit possession of firearms in governmental buildings. Clearly, recent events at the national level and around the country have highlighted the need for standards and protections related to firearms for elected officials and staff working in government buildings. Local officials are on the front lines in providing services and regulation to constituents: they consistently work in the public arena and make decisions that may anger individuals. We have been fortunate in Vermont to date.

We offer a few suggestions regarding the language of the bill. We agree that, in this instance, the standards need to be uniform across the state.

Please be clear that guns are prohibited in “public government buildings” so as to differentiate government buildings from other buildings that are defined as public in the statutes.

If the term “essential governmental functions” is used, please define that term clearly. We believe it would be easier to refer to public government buildings instead of defining essential governmental functions, which span an enormous range of responsibilities.

Your committee discussed how possession of firearms would be regulated outside of government buildings (such as parking lots) taking into account the fact that employees and visitors may have firearms stored in vehicles, particularly during hunting seasons. One approach to consider is the prohibition on smoking within 25 feet of state-owned buildings and offices:

18 V.S.A. § 1742 The possession of lighted tobacco products or use of tobacco substitutes in any form is prohibited in:

...

(4) any other area within 25 feet of State-owned buildings and offices, except that to the extent that any portion of the 25-foot zone is not on State property, smoking is prohibited only in that portion of the zone that is on State property unless the owner of the adjoining property chooses to designate his or her property smoke-free.

Thank you for taking up this issue. We believe that it is vitally important that the rules regarding firearms in government buildings are clear to all.