

**From:** Ethan Hildebrand  
**Sent:** Monday, March 6, 2023 11:01 AM  
**To:** Martin LaLonde  
**Cc:** Tom Burditt  
**Subject:** Re: Thoughts on H.230

Dear Representatives LaLonde and Burditt,

I am writing to you today as I became aware of H.230 being discussed in the House Committee on Judiciary. As a born and raised Vermonter from a family who has been here for countless generations, I had some concerns with some of the legislation within H.230, but also a general feeling of unease regarding a trend in bills introduced this session. I appreciate your time in advance of you reading my thoughts and concerns below.

I would like to first say, my opinions have no basis in political affiliation, I have viewpoints that span all of the spectrums on both "sides of the isle" per say, so much so that usually I have a difficult time choosing come voting day. With that said, my opinions regarding firearms come from a history of use and from a family who has used them for hunting and sporting and who takes firearm safety very very seriously.

My first concern with H.230 is the legislation that would penalize individuals for simply storing their firearm unlocked, even if nothing bad were to happen. I'm not sure how this would be enforced so I am a little confused as to why this would be necessary to put into law. Myself, as well as many friends and coworkers, grew up in households where if there was a gun left out, it was for a reason, and we were instructed from a very young age that it was not to be touched, and we obeyed those rules our parents/guardians set. I know this is still a common practice for gun owners today. I do understand, however, the need to hold firearm owners liable if a child were to get ahold of an unsecured gun and cause harm with that gun. My only question in regards to the liability piece would be, what if I were to leave a gun out on the kitchen table to dry overnight after hunting, knowing I will be grabbing it to go out in the morning again, and someone breaks in and steals the gun. Would I then be liable for any crime the burglar committed with my firearm even though I did not willingly give them the firearm?

The second concern I have with H.230 is the 3 day waiting period. I understand the need to keep firearms out of the hands of individuals who are making rash decisions. I, like many people, have had close family members committ suicide with a firearm, so I understand the pain revolving this subject and what the waiting period is trying to fix. My concern is that it would not have the effect we wish it would, while delaying the right Vermonters have to own a firearm, especially first time buyers. I saw in testimony from the original committee this bill started in stating that there were 2 cases over the past 10 years where individuals bought a gun and then committed suicide in short succession after. Would this waiting period have stopped them from the act or would they have pursued another means? I know this is impossible to answer, it is just the question that pops into my mind. Having said that, I do wish to see legislation that positively affects this, we have a red flag law in Vermont, is there a way we could utilize the NICS background check system to delay these individuals? This would allow the everyday Vermonter to still walk into a shop and purchase a firearm when they deem necessary but delay those who may just be going through a tough time. Furthering on that idea, if they were to be delayed, could there be a notification that would go out to the suicide prevention services to call the

individual or inform friends/family to intervene? I know there are countless other ways to help out here, I just try to think of ways that benefit all parties, rather than just one.

I apologize for the long read, I am trying to get my thoughts across as best as possible, and I by no means want to sound like an angry person on one wing or the other. My concern arises with what I am seeing as a shift in culture within Vermont. I know things change over time, and that is inevitable, but I see a shift from a self-sustaining, rugged, yet caring Vermont to one which is more reliant on the government to protect and provide for it and more split politically and socially. I have never felt more disconnected from a large number of my fellow Vermonters as I do now, and frankly, it scares me. Although this feeling spills over to many political issues for me, I will try and stay focused on firearm related legislation for this message. I hate to say it, but I see the bills proposed this session, and I can't help but notice it seems like a "copy/paste" from all the other gun laws proposed in much more populated states as well as on the national level, many of which are being challenged in court or have had less than impressive outcomes in preventing gun violence. One thing I have always prided myself on is that Vermont was the unique outlier in the country who did it's own thing and somehow always ended up with great outcomes, COVID was a great example of this, we kept our numbers lower than most and also operated differently than most, with the outcome everyone else was hoping for but couldn't achieve. Broad reaching gun legislation may seem like the "easy" way, but these laws are typically born in areas where firearm owners are few and far between, so the vast majority are unaffected in a negative way. Vermont isn't like that, as I'm sure you are both well aware of. Many Vermonters, like myself, would love nothing more than to see the gun violence numbers plummet to 0, and I think there are ways to set us on track to do that here in Vermont, which do not ban/prohibit/mandate those who have and will never do any wrong. Many of us do not support the gun laws that are always talked about on the news (gun/magazine bans, waiting periods, safe storage laws, sensitive places, ect.), but would love to work towards lowering gun related violence in other ways and are keen to work and help out with this effort. I have other thoughts and ideas to share and I would be happy to talk further. Also, and I'll keep this short as I'm sure this drum gets beat a lot in committee, but with the Heller and Bruen decisions passed down by SCOTUS, there are countless lawsuits on existing gun laws popping up all over the country. Although very few have had enough time to work their way through the courts, there are many starting to lean towards being deemed unconstitutional under the new rulings. My opinions aside, these suits are expensive to defend and draw a lot of negative media attention on both sides of the argument. I would rather Vermont keep our money spent on ourselves rather than defending against long and expensive suits in court. Again that idea doesn't stem from an opinion regarding guns, just a fellow Vermonter hoping to get the most out of his tax dollars (frost heave season is here aka ski jump season, and I'm sure there will be plenty to fix come late April, I think we all know a few that can knock teeth out if you aren't ready for them!).

I'll cut myself off there, I don't want to take too much time, just a fellow Vermonter who is concerned about a recent bend in culture, easily seen in regards to views on gun control. I hope this message comes across as genuine, it certainly isn't based on a political opinion or anger, just concern with how I see things have started to change, I just want to see Vermont stay as Vermont always has been. I would love to talk more regarding this subject if either of you would like to. Please feel free to email me back if either of you wish and if you would like to chat via phone call, that would be great. I will provide my number if we go that route, the number

changes depending on where I am due to lack of cell coverage at my home. I hope all is well and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Ethan Hildebrand  
Rochester, VT