



To: House Committee on Judiciary
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: House Bill 381 - An act relating to prohibiting the manufacture and transfer of gas-operated semiautomatic firearms

Position: Oppose

Date: March 10, 2025

Honorable Members of the Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Fred Bird, and I am the Manager, Eastern States for the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation (CSF) and a licensed Vermont sportsman. I write to you today, respectfully urging you to oppose House Bill 381 (HB 381) – legislation that poses to not only severely impact Vermont's recreational shooting and hunting community, but also reduce much-needed conservation funding that state fish and wildlife agencies across the country, including the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VTFWD), use to effectively conserve our wildlife resources and their habitats.

Founded in 1989, CSF is the informed authority across outdoor issues and serves as the primary conduit for influencing public policy. Working with the Congressional Sportsmen's Caucus (CSC), the Governors Sportsmen's Caucus (GSC), and the National Assembly of Sportsmen's Caucuses (NASC), CSF gives a voice to hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, and trappers on Capitol Hill and throughout state capitols advocating on vital outdoor issues that are the backbone of our nation's conservation legacy. It is from this background – with more than three and a half decades of organizational history, and a staff with approximately two centuries of combined policy experience on sportsmen's issues – that I voice our opposition to HB 381.

HB 381 intends to prohibit the manufacture, transfer, offer for sale, purchase, or receipt or import into this State any gas-operated or piston driven semiautomatic firearms. Ultimately, given the definitions included within this bill, the sale or transfer of firearms that are quite common within the hunting and recreational shooting communities, and often come standard from the factory, would become prohibited.

Modern sporting rifles, other semiautomatic firearms, and their respective accessories are commonly purchased and possessed by hunters and recreational shooters across the United States,

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including in Vermont, who value them for their durability and reliability. Modern sporting rifles are now the most popular type of firearms in America and are used for a wide variety of lawful purposes, including hunting, varmint control, shooting sports, and personal defense.

In addition to restricting access to these firearms for hunting and recreational shooting, a ban on these commonly purchased modern sporting rifles, semi-automatic firearms, and their respective accessories would also negatively impact conservation funding. Vermont's law-abiding hunters and recreational shooters have long played a vital role in funding conservation and wildlife management efforts. Under the American System of Conservation Funding (ASCF), a unique "user pays – public benefits" structure, Vermont's sportsmen and women and the hunting and shooting communities generate tens of millions of dollars each year for the VTFWD.

These funds are generated through license sales and a self-imposed manufacturer-level 10-11% federal excise tax on firearm and ammunition purchases through the Pittman-Robertson Act. These funds are collected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and then distributed to the states to fund state fish and wildlife agencies and their important work as our nation's primary managers of our collective fish and wildlife resources. Last year, the USFWS dispersed nearly \$1 billion in total funding to the state agencies through Pittman-Robertson, of which \$800 million was directly tied to taxes paid by the firearm and ammunition industry. Here in Vermont, \$5.9 million was received through Pittman-Robertson, providing vital funding revenue to the state's conservation, habitat restoration, and wildlife management efforts of both game and non-game species.

HB 381, if passed, would create a chilling effect on the state's hunting and recreational shooting activities, and would thus threaten the very funding that supports the state's habitats and wildlife populations—something which all Vermont citizens should care about. In recognition of the far-reaching negative impact HB 381 would have on Vermont's hunters, recreational shooting community, and on wildlife conservation throughout the state, I urge the members of this committee to vote "NO" and oppose HB 381.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on this legislation. If you have questions or would like any additional information, please feel free to contact me using the information below.

Sincerely,



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