



February 10, 2026

Vermont House of Representatives

House Committee on Ways and Means

RE: Support for H.418, *An act relating to an excise tax on the sale of firearms and ammunition*

Members of the Committee:

My name is Jessie Ojeda, and I serve as a state policy attorney with GIFFORDS, the national gun safety organization founded by former Congresswoman, gun violence survivor, and gun owner Gabby Giffords. **I am writing to express GIFFORDS's strong support for H.418.**

H.418 is a practical and responsible proposal that asks the firearm industry to contribute to addressing the real and ongoing harms associated with its products, while strengthening Vermont's ability to support survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Importantly, this bill does not place new burdens on survivors or the general public. Instead, it places responsibility where it belongs—on an industry whose products are frequently used in acts of domestic and sexual violence, even as it continues to generate substantial profits from their sale.

The unfortunate reality is that firearms are commonly used in domestic violence situations, and their presence significantly escalates the danger faced by victims. **Research has found that when an abusive partner has access to a firearm, the risk that a woman will be killed increases by more than five times.** In the aftermath, survivors often need immediate and long-term support, including emergency shelter, counseling, legal advocacy, and safety planning. These services save lives, but they remain chronically underfunded, leaving providers across Vermont to meet growing needs with limited and uncertain resources.

H.418 helps address this challenge by creating a new, dedicated source of funding for the Domestic and Sexual Violence Special Fund. Existing funds alone have not kept pace with the demand for services. The excise tax established by this bill would strengthen the Fund and provide more predictable resources so programs serving survivors can plan responsibly and continue delivering critical support.

The 11% excise tax proposed in H.418 is modest and reasonable. It is not designed to stop lawful firearm ownership or interfere with Second Amendment rights. Instead, it reflects a long-standing and widely accepted principle of public policy: when an industry's products are closely connected to serious social harms, it is appropriate for that industry to help offset the costs of those harms.

This approach is not new. For more than a century, federal law has imposed an excise tax on firearms and ammunition, with the revenue dedicated to wildlife conservation. That tax has been supported by the firearm industry itself and has never been viewed as an attack on lawful gun ownership. H.418 applies the same logic to human harm—asking for a small contribution to help address the real and measurable costs that gun violence imposes on families, communities, and taxpayers.

Vermont has long taken a thoughtful and pragmatic approach to public safety. H.418 continues that tradition by strengthening the systems that support survivors and respond to the consequences of violence. **For these reasons, GIFFORDS strongly supports H.418 and respectfully urges the Committee to advance this important legislation.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jessie Ojeda
State Policy Attorney, GIFFORDS