

Buxton, Maine
March 5, 2024

RE: LD 2086 An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Disposition of Forfeited Firearms

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Mooney, members of the Judiciary Committee

My name is William Jefferson. I reside in Buxton, Maine. I am writing in support of LD 2086 as amended by Senator Carney to include conversion devices in the definition of machine guns, bringing state law into line with federal statute.

I am a Vietnam combat veteran. Over the course of my year-long tour of duty (1968-69) I employed and became familiar with all of the standard issue infantry weapons of the period as well as many used by our enemies.

The American war in Vietnam was a war of attrition, its' success - or failure - measured largely by the daily report of enemy dead, or the "body count." That statistic, employed liberally and, very often, fraudulently by officers up and down the chain of command, came to define the great lie that fueled our intervention in that conflict for ten long years.

In the fifty-five years since my return home from the war it has become increasingly clear that we have learned little or nothing from that tragic failure. And as our seeming infatuation with foreign intervention by force of arms draws us into even longer and less-well articulated conflicts, the American public attitude toward its armed forces has evolved from disdain, toward the end of our Southeast Asian debacle, to a kind of reverence that I find disquieting.

Meanwhile, the firearms with which the civilian population of the United States were most familiar, rifles and hand guns used for hunting and target shooting, have gradually been superseded by more powerful and deadly ones, with larger magazine capacities, laser sights and bullets that - like those my M-16 fired - don't simply make a hole in a target, but tear it apart from the inside out. Designed, in other words, to kill a fellow human as quickly and certainly as possible.

In the wake of last month's massacre of innocent people in Lewiston I found myself unclear about the relationship of the generic AR15 to the standard issue military weapon of my war. Stopping by a big box store that displayed a variety of such guns, I asked to have a look at a typical example. The weapon that the salesman placed in my arms was instantly familiar to anyone has carried - and killed with - a military weapon, and for just one moment, enveloping the gun in my arms as I'd done every day in the war, I felt the most remarkable - and instantly recognizable - sense of power, of invincibility, of a kind that the weapons of my war had provided me as a soldier in the field.

I came away with a new understanding of the attitude that has both overwhelmed and undermined our culture, and a newly realized fear for our future.

Clearly, new measures are called for. Let's start by getting the weapons of war off the streets of our communities.