

BOTH LD 2086 and LD 2119

Good afternoon Senator Carney, Representative Moonen, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Paul Potvin and I am from Hampden.

I am testifying in support of [LD 2119](#) - An Act to Support Suicide Prevention by Allowing the Voluntary Waiver of Firearm Rights and [LD 2086](#) - An Act to Amend the Law Governing the Disposition of Forfeited Firearms and the Sponsored Amendment to include conversion devices in the definition of machine gun.

I am a recently retired Emergency Medicine Physician, and have not only practiced medicine in Maine for 43 years but also have been a gun owner and an avid hunter and sportsman during that time.

Voluntary forfeiture of firearms by individuals who determine themselves to be at risk of firearm violence including suicide is a low cost prevention strategy, a public health service for people in crisis who are calling out for help.

Including devices capable of converting semi automatic rifles into machine guns in the restrictions of machine guns is just plain common sense. A machine gun whether you buy it or make it is still a machine gun.

I request the committee vote ought to pass for these two bills.

However I must add that these bills don't go quite far enough. The easy availability of high powered rifles capable of rapidly firing large

numbers of rounds without reloading serves no practical purpose for civilians. Whether it's a semiautomatic rifle or a fully automatic rifle, i.e. a machine gun, if it has a large capacity magazine it has no legal use for hunting in Maine and has no advantage for target shooting. It is illegal in Maine to hunt with a firearm capable of holding more than 5 rounds in the magazine. Higher capacity magazines are designed for combat situations where stopping to reload might subject the shooter to enemy fire. We are not at war here in Maine. Higher capacity magazines should be prohibited devices.

As far as traditional semiautomatic rifles, they have been commonly used in Maine for hunting and target shooting for decades. Both assault or AR-15 style semi-automatic and traditional hunting semi-automatic rifles reload the next round automatically and require only a trigger pull to fire the next round. The difference between them for some has been a subject of debate, yet most people would have no trouble identifying an assault or AR-15 style rifle at a glance. They were designed as a weapon of war and look like it. Unlike most rifles designed for hunting, they typically have a collapsible stock and a pistol grip. They have been the weapon of choice for mass shooters, perhaps due to these and other unique features including their menacing appearance.

A recent Bangor Daily article that was based on an interview with David Trahan, executive director of the Sportman's Alliance of Maine was full of misinformation. It stated that assault style rifles were becoming popular amongst hunters in Maine, that they are lighter, and shorter and therefore easier to carry, that they are customizable,

come in a variety of calibers, and are easy to clean, and that they cause less damage. Each one of these assertions is false or misleading.

I know many hunters and none of them use an assault or AR-15 style rifle to hunt, let alone even own one! I believe an impartial survey of Maine hunters would support that observation.

Many styles and makes of hunting rifles are available that are lighter than the assault rifles and shorter versions are available. They also come in variety of calibers. Hunting rifles must actually be easier to clean than assault rifles because MDIFW recently apparently felt compelled to offer a course specifically to show people how to clean and maintain AR-15 style rifles.

(Incidentally, the course was being held at the SAM shooting range and the MDIFW email reassured the 411,000 newsletter recipients "If you haven't purchased one, there will be an AR on site for practice". This sure looks like SAM was using the MDIFW platform and taxpayer money to promote further propagation of AR-15 style rifle ownership. That is totally unacceptable. To their credit, MDIFW promptly cancelled the course after receiving multiple complaints.)

[SAM and the NRA have been unwavering opponents of firearm restrictions with the NRA's stance being that 'no gun law is a good law'. Years ago I was a member of SAM and the NRA but have distanced myself from them since they have become so political and unwavering in their opposition to sensible gun legislation, using fear and false rhetoric as tactics. This is taken from the SAM website:

“In 2017, the SAM Board of Directors split the Sportsman’s Alliance of Maine into two sister organizations as a way to better serve our membership’s needs. Because we are involved in so many political battles, including referendums, lobbying at the State House and candidate endorsements during elections, the board established SAM ILA, according to Internal Revenue Service rules. With a C-4 designation, SAM-ILA will be less restricted and will be able to have more of an impact in Augusta and at the ballot box.”

And this is from an IRS website:

“501(c)(4)-1(a)(2)(i) provides that: [A]n organization is operated exclusively for the promotion of social welfare if it is primarily engaged in promoting in some way the common good and general welfare of the community. ... The 501c4 organization cannot stand in support of or against any politician, whether done indirectly or directly.”

Can SAM-ILA really be operating exclusively for promotion of social welfare, common good and general welfare of the community when it lobbies against sensible restrictions on weapons of war and such things as background checks and waiting periods? It represents a few thousand members yet it operates to influence the lives of some 1.3 million Mainers and many more people who visit the state. Its tax exempt status should be called into question.]

Many modern traditional style hunting rifles have synthetic stocks rather than wood making them more weather resistant and resilient. The BDN article says traditional hunting rifles look like your grandfather’s gun which may be true but today they are just as likely to look like your boyfriend’s gun, girlfriend’s gun, buddies gun or hunting hero’s gun.

To say assault rifles cause less damage when the result is death of the animal (or person) who is hit by one shows how ludicrous the argument trying to support their unrestricted availability really is. What makes assault or AR-15 style rifles particularly more dangerous is their attractiveness to those inclined to use them to kill people, as well as the ease in which they are used with high capacity magazines. Both the AR-15 style rifle and high capacity magazines should be restricted . I urge the committee to vote in favor of doing so.

Thank you for your consideration and your work on this topic. I am happy to answer questions, and I also know that there are others that will follow that might be able to answer specific questions.