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LD 486

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus, and members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee,

I am writing this testimony in opposition to LD 486, “ An Act to “Remove the Duty of an Individual Exercising Self-defense to Safely Retreat or Abstain from Performing Certain Acts upon Demand.”

Many years ago, I took a self-defense class with the former John Jenkins. (You may have known John as a former mayor of both Lewiston and Auburn and a member of the Maine Senate, but John was also a Martial Arts expert and a member of the World Martial Arts Hall of Fame.)

The first thing he told us in this class - and told us repeatedly- was that the best self-defense measure was to retreat – walk, run away from the situation. This was the safest approach for everyone involved in an altercation.

In agreement with this doctrine Legal principles and self-defense laws in the US affirm people’s right to use proportionate physical force to defend themselves and others against imminent violence. These laws also justify a person’s use of lethal force if it is necessary to prevent death or serious injury but they make clear that taking a human life is not justified when it could be avoided by retreating from the altercation.

“Stand your Ground Laws” allow individuals to use lethal force as a first step, rather than the last resort. They violate all principles of legal tradition, upend self-defense doctrine and disregard respect for the sanctity of human life.

States that have adopted “Shoot First” laws have shown an increase in firearms homicide rates (FL 32% increase since law was implemented) and firearms injuries. Often, the wrong person is shot. States with such laws have higher homicide rates.

These laws, originally called “True Man Laws” encourage violence and an armed vigilante culture.

LD 486 is unnecessary. People with a legitimate reason to defend themselves are already fully protected under traditional self-defense law.

LD 486 has no place in our state.

I urge you to oppose LD 486.