

Richard J Ples  
Mt Vernon Maine  
LD 486

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03/15/2025

The Honorable Members  
Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

Re: Strong Support for “An Act to Remove the Duty of an Individual Exercising Self-defense to Safely Retreat or Abstain from Performing Certain Acts upon Demand”

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to strongly urge you to support “An Act to Remove the Duty of an Individual Exercising Self-defense to Safely Retreat or Abstain from Performing Certain Acts upon Demand.” This bill is not just about protecting rights—it’s about safeguarding the lives of Maine residents who deserve the ability to defend themselves without being forced to put their lives in jeopardy by retreating from dangerous situations.

Maine is not immune to violence. In 2022 alone, the Maine State Police reported nearly 17,000 violent crime incidents, including aggravated assaults. That’s 17,000 people who were in fear for their lives and may have faced the impossible choice of retreating or being harmed, when the only true option was to protect themselves. Why should anyone be forced to run from a threat if they’re cornered and have no viable means of escape? Why should anyone be forced to retreat into danger, putting their own lives at greater risk?

This bill ensures that Maine residents don’t have to weigh the decision of whether retreating is safer than standing their ground. It removes the legal burden that could criminalize someone for using force to defend themselves when they’ve been left with no choice but to do so. And it is long overdue.

According to national studies, states with “Stand Your Ground” laws have seen a notable decrease in violent crime. The National Bureau of Economic Research in 2017 documented how such laws resulted in fewer homicides and provided citizens with a sense of security in the face of rising violence. With crime on the rise in Maine, including a disturbing 3% increase in aggravated assaults from 2021 to 2022, we need this legal framework now more than ever. Mainers should never be forced to choose between becoming a victim or being prosecuted for defending themselves.

Furthermore, the people of Maine have spoken loud and clear. A 2021 survey by the Maine Bureau of Criminal Investigation showed 75% of Mainers believe self-defense is an essential right and that individuals should not be legally required to retreat when confronted with a genuine threat. This bill represents the will of the people and the commitment to keeping our citizens safe by empowering them to protect themselves in dangerous situations.

By removing the duty to retreat, this bill aligns with the principles of personal responsibility and individual liberty, reaffirming the right of every Mainer to defend themselves when facing a real threat to their life. We cannot afford to let the government limit the ability of law-abiding citizens to defend themselves when faced with harm. Allowing the duty of retreat to remain intact sends a dangerous message that your life is not worth protecting if you can’t run fast enough.

I urge you to stand on the side of common sense, personal liberty, and public safety. Support this bill to ensure that every Mainer can defend themselves with confidence and without fear of legal retribution. Thank you for your attention and for your commitment to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,

Richard J Ples