



SAM-ILA

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Testimony in Opposition

LD 168, An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer or Exchange of Firearms

Before the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee

Presented by Mike Shaw on behalf of David Trahan, Executive Director of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine - Institute for Legislative Action (SAM-ILA)

Monday, April 3, 2023

The Honorable Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee, my name is Mike Shaw, I am presenting this testimony on behalf of David Trahan, Executive Director of the Sportsman's Alliance of Maine-Institute for Legislative Action, testifying in opposition to LD 168, *An Act Regarding Criminal Background Checks for the Sale, Transfer or Exchange of Firearms*

For decades, gun control advocates have tried to expand the NICS background check system to private, (non-ATF licensed sales and transfers) and every year the efforts fail for very similar reasons. In 2016, Maine Question 3, formally An Act to Require Background Checks for Gun Sales, was a citizen-initiated referendum question that appeared on the Maine November 8, 2016, statewide ballot. It sought to require a background check for virtually all gun transfers in Maine, again, like past Legislatures, Maine people rejected it.

There are consequences to expanding background checks to private sales. In order to be effective, Maine would have to create a mechanism like a firearm registry and collect private

firearm ownership information necessary to ensure compliance. Firearm owner registry is just one step away from outlawing certain types of firearms and firearm components. We see legislation every year to ban certain types of firearms and firearm components and according to studies of firearm bans, the reason they fail is because the government did not require them to be confiscated or turned in under a buyback program. Given that these types of firearm-ban policies are at the top of some national and state elected leader's agendas, gun owner's concerns are warranted.

Firearm background checks for commercial sales is a well-established policy; in addition, many licensed commercial firearm dealers offer to conduct background checks for private sales, and we support these efforts. For years, there was an education campaign that encouraged voluntary background checks in private sale, and it was very effective, I know because as a licensed dealer, our organization conducted many as a service to our members.

We cannot support an expansion of the background check system as we feel it is impossible to enforce without a registry and furthermore, we understand gun control advocates will never stop until they achieve all their goals.