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LD 303 "An Act to Repeal the Law Prohibiting Unauthorized Paramilitary Training"

Good afternoon Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and my esteemed colleagues on the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee.

As most of you were here last session you realize that this legislation went into effect pretty hastily. We were told that it was a stand alone original bill directly in reference to a group of Nazis that had opened a paramilitary training camp in the deep woods above the town of Lee, Maine. Which is in the northern most area of Penobscot County. Upon the passage of this bill into law we learned that the "Nazis" in question were a ragtag group of very unskilled individuals that numbered in the single digits and were long gone before any of this was brought to light. Furthermore we learned that the identical bill had been presented in the legislature in more than half the states in our nation, almost at the same time.

At the time I had raised some objections, one of which is the lack of definitions in this bill. Another was the reference to unauthorized when there is clearly no method in which unauthorized paramilitary groups could become authorized.

Thinking back over the last 35 years since I got out of the military, I recall being involved in several groups that fall into this definition. The last group I was instrumental in creating was a group made up of about 15 people in which we trained throughout the winter and developed proficiency in marksmanship while also developing rank structure, fundraising, recruiting, public outreach, and a mission statement. The group came up with a name and we were known as The Mid-Maine Minutemen. Now if I stop there it sounds ominous but I will continue just a little further, these individuals were teenagers, by the springtime in 2013 their marksmanship skills had grown to the point where any of them could take a service rifle directly out of the box, clean and inspect it, set up a sight system, sight in the rifle, and proficiently hit the target at about 3 times the distance that our current president was shot in Butler Pennsylvania a few months ago. Now as Paul Harvey would say "Here is the rest of the story", this group was established with over 70%

District 30 Abbot, Beaver Cove, Bowerbank, Cambridge, Greenville, Greenville Junction, Guilford, Monson, Parkman, Sangerville, Sebec, Shirley, Wellington and Willimantic, Plantations of; Kingsbury Plantation and Brighton Plantation, the unorganized territories of; Barnard Township, Elliottsville Township, Big Moose Township, Bowdoin College Grant East Township, Chesuncook Township, Cove Point Township, Days Academy Grant Township, Frenchtown Township, Harfords Point Township, Kineo Township, Lily Bay Township, Moosehead Junction Township, Northeast Carry Township, Shawtown Township, Sugar Island Township, Williamsburg Township, Blanchard, Northeast Piscataquis and Northwest Piscataquis

of the participants being female and working under the umbrella of the University of Maine 4 H program. The name was presented to the group by one of these young ladies, voted on, and then subsequently a poll was conducted in the county because of the concerns of University staff that the word "men" might be offensive.

Last session I shared the example of the only paramilitary organization that I am aware of that has been around since World War I. Studying, I can't find a reference prior to officers in the United States Military speaking of the need for our country to adopt scouting from the British which was and still is today an organization primarily based on teaching adolescents and teens the skills and personal disciplines necessary to be successful officers and enlisted personnel in a military scenario. This program has been such a success from its inception that anyone that qualifies by reaching the title of Eagle Scout, prior to their 18th birthday, gains one full rank of advancement upon their commission or enlistment in any branch of our military.

I also spoke of a group of adults in Piscataquis County that formed and trained as a militia without authorization from anyone except the state and federal constitution. These men and women made up of former military, and civilians who at their own expense and sacrifice of time and resources had spent years developing their skills, offered their services during the hunt for a now convicted murderer. Though they were utilized only on the outermost perimeters of the search their presence freed up resources that were utilized in other areas.

The verbiage in the law currently on the books is totally subjective and allows the beliefs of the Attorney General to judge what someone's intent may be in the future, and penalize the individual or the group. The idea that two people assembled together could be interpreted by one person as intent to perform unauthorized militia activities is absurd. This law was put in place to fix a problem that wasn't there. It opens up standards that are so vague that an old man telling war stories to his grandson in a diner could be considered grounds to convict. This law stands in contradiction to some of our most basic constitutional rights. Freedom of assembly being the most notable. The idea that a law could be written to judge what two or more people may be intending on doing is far more dangerous to our nation than the fear of a handful of people that we disagree with meeting in the woods of northern Maine.