

LD 1743 An Act to Allow Municipalities to Prohibit Firearms Within Their Municipal Buildings and Voting Places and at Their Municipal Public Proceedings

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, Members of the committee, I am David Souers. I live in Friendship, Maine. I am a retired healthcare facility architect from a family that owned, collected and used firearms as a hobby, and for recreation, target practice, hunting and protecting our agriculture from certain wildlife, in compliance with a variety of laws protecting ourselves and others for the types of firearms, locations and use.

I am testifying in favor of LD 1743 for the following reasons:

1. This Bill does not limit nor prohibit firearms anymore than the security requirements for other public building like the State House, court houses, airports and other government and public buildings as determined by public authorities with responsibility for public safety within their facilities. This Bill only gives municipalities the option to limit or prohibit civilian firearms within their buildings, proceedings and polling places, similar to the Statehouse and courthouse prohibitions.
2. This Bill will enable municipalities to decide for themselves where and when there may be potential for contentious activities and behavior that may threaten the safety and well being of their officials, staff and visitors during their work day and after hours activities. It helps to prevent firearms from being on hand within the building among people who may want to bully and intimidate others at municipal public proceedings.
3. This Bill will enable municipalities to help citizens to be and feel more safe, when attending municipal public proceedings and when voting, knowing that firearms are not permitted nor promoted to be present.
4. The U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision in Bruen holds that "it is settled" that firearms may be prohibited at "legislative assemblies, polling places, and courthouses." Therefore, municipal limitations and prohibitions of firearms within their facilities and proceedings do not infringe on citizens' Second Amendment rights.
5. This Bill will uphold Maine citizens' constitutional right, under the Maine Constitution, to pursue and obtain "safety" which includes being free from threats and fear of firearms being present.
6. With this Bill, municipalities will be able to act more quickly and effectively to make their own threat assessments and enact appropriate municipal firearm limits and prohibitions to enhance security in the event of potential or developing threats to town officials and citizens.
7. Opponents who argue that this Bill will allow towns to create "soft targets" of gun violence by prohibiting or limiting firearms is not supported by any evidence. An April

2025 study by the Rockefeller Institute of Government found that active shootings were 62.5% less likely to occur in gun-free establishments.

- a. There is no evidence nor security measures that a municipality can depend on that guarantees the safety of officials, staff and public by allowing firearms to be freely brought into their municipal building. There is no method to know, plan, nor protect with random private gun owners in a facility, against someone with a firearm suddenly using it against armed or unarmed persons in the building. This is why the State House bans firearms, uses security equipment and employs security guards.
 - b. I enter our Friendship town hall frequently for many reasons to address my needs with Town officials or to attend Town meetings. I have never seen anyone, Town official or member of the public carrying a firearm. I would not and many in my Town would not feel comfortable or safe if we knew people were commonly carrying firearms into the Town Hall. Meetings among some people can get heated. A sign on the front door to restrict entry with a firearm may not be needed at this time in Friendship, but if the Town saw firearms in the Town Hall it would be appropriate for the citizens and Town Select Board to be able to make a decision on how we address this. Certainly, our Town officials are not prepared to protect themselves nor the public if gun violence suddenly developed within the building, even though some are gun owners. Inviting firearms into municipal buildings is not a reasonable means of protection. You might be inviting in the very person you are concerned may shoot you.
8. Opponents' argument that this Bill will cause "a myriad of conflicting and confusing local firearm laws" is refuted by the fact that this Bill requires any municipality enacting a firearm prohibition or limitation to post its terms prominently on its facilities, so as to be clear to everyone. Nothing is unclear about signs posted at the entrances of a municipal building banning firearms as we see at the entrance at the State House. Banning firearms in municipal buildings is sufficiently commonplace that the intent is well understood when signs are posted.
 9. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 18 states permit municipalities to prohibit or limit the possession of firearms in municipal buildings and during municipal public proceedings: They are: AK, CO, DE, IO, IND, KS, MD, MS, MT, ~~NE~~ NC, ND, OR, SC, TN, TX, VA, and WV.

I advocate that LD 1743 ought to pass.