



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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(207) 287-1440
MAINE RELAY 711

James Lee White

306 Wharff Road
Guilford, ME 04443
James.White@legislature.maine.gov
Cell: (207) 564-7308

LD 885

Good afternoon Senator Rafferty and Representative Murphy and distinguished members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee.

I am Representative James White, I am representing the majority of Piscataquis County and 2 towns in Somerset, in my second term. I have also owned a gun shop and been a manufacturer of firearms since 1990.

Though this seems on the surface to be a subject that would take a lot of deep testimony on my part, I am going to make this presentation as simple as possible. As I know many of you have been in education for many years and can attest to the changes in our classrooms and extra curricular activities over the last 30 years. I have watched this process very closely as well. Having children and grandchildren myself and having worked in the public school system a decade ago teaching CTE classes I personally have witnessed the changes. Many of the procedures that have been put in place are poorly thought out and do more to instill the feeling of helplessness and fear in the children and staff than they do to prevent the violence that they are supposedly designed to mitigate. I would love to discuss how as an instructor my students were forced to be locked in a small room with the lights out for an extended period of time for an unannounced drill. Only to be paraded out into a parking lot between parked cars with very few routes of egress when the fire alarm went off for another unannounced drill a few days later. It seems as though the lessons made available by the tragedies in Jonesboro, Arkansas and Columbine were not only simply overlooked but flat out rejected. The first, Jonesboro

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

Arkansas, after two adolescents - 13 and 11 years old - broke in to one of their grandparents home and stole a hunting rifle from a locked safe by physically breaking into the safe. They staged the rifle before school, one student went to school and pulled the fire alarm and returned over a hundred yards away to pass off ammunition to the shooter. After firing over 200 rounds, 5 were dead, 10 were seriously wounded and the nation had been morally scarred. Though my bill today will not do anything about the willful jeopardy that children are placed in by training them to blindly march out into what could so easily become an ambush each time the fire alarm goes off in a manner that is reminiscent of Pavlov's dog. It would address the issue that we saw in the massacre at Columbine. We have seen repeatedly that purveyors of this sort of evil choose to find locations that provide the least resistance. Not knowing if there is an armed citizen in the crowd is often a deterrent. I don't say this as just an anecdote. As we have witnessed in the shooting at a grocery store in Buffalo NY that the perpetrator had journaled about locations that he had studied to commit a mass shooting. Noted in that journal was the fact that the store was "a gun free zone". In the more recent school shooting in Tennessee the transcripts of multiple journals that the perpetrator wrote in prior to committing the crime discussed her choice of the remote Christian School and she named a few reasons why she chose it over the inner city school that she had initially wanted to target. Her number one reason was that the response time was significantly longer for police to respond, she also noted that the children were younger and she felt that she would get less resistance during her rampage. She also noted that the school was made up of primarily white children and she was afraid of having the massacre mischaracterized in the media by referring to her as a racist if she massacred children of color.

I am aware that this will be mischaracterized as Representative White trying to recreate the wild, wild west or Representative White trying to bring dangerous weapons into the presence of children, by arming untrained individuals that have some sort of blood lust, but none of these things are true. I can assure you that the last thing that I want to see is violence, no matter what the scenario. However, I have been around long enough to

realize that simply putting a sticker on the window will not prevent your worst nightmares. As was testified to in the Judiciary Committee in the last session, after the Lewiston Massacre, the only person to testify that had actually been shot at by the perpetrator stated - the only thing that could have stopped what was going on was a responsible gun owner being allowed to have a firearm and fight back. As we see in the writings of perpetrators of such crimes, not knowing if there will be a responsible gun owner in the crowd is a huge deterrent. We also see in real life examples that a responsible citizen with a firearm does mitigate the damage quite frequently when something like this does occur. A prime example of this is the story that you have probably never heard of, the night club shooting that took place just one week after the horrendous Pulse Night Club massacre that happened in Florida. The second took place in Tennessee and only a few shots in, the assailant was neutralized by an armed citizen, while still in the possession of over 125 rounds of ammunition on their person the threat had been stopped. Unfortunately, stories like this don't get the media attention that massacres in gun free zones receive.

Here is the key to my bill, prior to schools becoming gun free zones or as I refer to them "free victim zones" it was not unlawful for a person with a concealed carry permit that you stand in line with at the convenience store or at the grocery store, or walk down the street beside, or pass in the park to be sitting beside you at a basketball game in your local highschool gymnasium. The goal of the people who carry concealed firearms has always been to simply not be a victim without drawing unnecessary attention to the fact that they were carrying a firearm. This happened then and happens today in much higher numbers than you realize. When I first started in the firearms industry, in 1990, I recall a young nurse and her husband that came into my shop looking to upgrade the handgun that she had carried for the previous two years. Frankly I was taken aback that she had made such a decision, but when they explained that she got off shift at 2 am and had a long walk to the backside of a dark parking lot where the employees parked and a long ride home and there had been sexual assaults that had taken place to some of her co workers, I started to understand. This isn't about cliches that will be thrown around about

somebody wanting to feel tough or having a rambo complex. It didn't take long in my career before I realized that many of the most meek and unassuming people in our world choose to protect themselves first by learning the skills necessary, obtaining a concealed firearms permit and religiously carrying a concealed firearm for protection. This is not different from carrying my glasses so I can see and be equal to someone that is blessed with 20/20 vision.

Thank you all for your consideration of a point of view that you may not have been presented prior to my testimony.

Representative James White