

INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

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NRA

May 3, 2021

Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety

100 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

Dear Senator Deschambault, Representative Warren, and Honorable Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you regarding Legislative Document 1052 (LD 1052) – an act to protect the firearm use and possession rights of Maine citizens during an emergency, and Legislative Document 1315 (LD 1315) – an act to protect firearm use and possession rights during a state of emergency and require a two-thirds vote by Legislative Council to declare or extend a state of emergency. On behalf of the National Rifle Association, I would like to express our strong support for both of these important pieces of legislation.

In times of civil disorder, crisis, or uncertainty, Americans buy guns for protection and other lawful purposes. As concerned citizens across the state turned to federal firearm licensed retailers (FFLs) to exercise their constitutional right to purchase and own firearms, Maine initially refused to designate FFLs as “essential businesses” and those establishments were ultimately forced to close. Similar decisions in other states resulted in litigation to allow these businesses to reopen; in Maine, however, the governor reconsidered her initial stance and reclassified these businesses as “essential.”

Recognizing the differing ways in which different forms of government were treating gun stores, the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Agency (CISA), a part of the Department of Homeland Security, began issuing revisions to its advisory memorandum listing “essential” infrastructure and workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It decided gun shops, ammunition manufacturers and shooting ranges were essential businesses.

The Second Amendment guarantees the right to keep and bear arms, however, when gun stores close, when ammunition is not allowed to be sold, when gun ranges are shut down, an individual’s ability to keep and bear arms becomes hindered or rendered impossible. We have witnessed periods of mass panic and protests that illegally claimed sovereign areas in cities like Seattle. We have witnessed incredible amounts of property destruction, damage to businesses and injury to individuals. People have recognized their need to be able to defend themselves, particularly when law enforcement is extended beyond its capabilities.

Over the last year, gun and ammunition sales have soared, as has the number of individuals relying on shooting ranges to become proficient in safe firearm use and self-defense techniques. This is not restricted to ordinary citizens. Members of law enforcement tend to obtain their firearms and ammunition from their local firearm retailers, as do members of the armed forces,

and such members use local shooting ranges to ensure proficiency in the use of their firearms.

Finally, during these declarations of emergency, some local jurisdictions have delayed processing carry permit applications or purchase permits, which hinders individuals from exercising their Second Amendment rights at the front end. LD 1052 and LD 1315 would prohibit this unreasonable action and suspends the expiration date for concealed handgun permits during the state of emergency. Both of these important pieces of legislation will ensure that the Second Amendment is protected during trying times and declarations of emergency. It will not only help your constituents in matters of self-defense but help ensure our law enforcement officers and military personnel have the training and equipment they need.

On behalf of the thousands of NRA members in Maine, I respectfully request that you support LD 1052 and LD 1315. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lauren E. LePage".

Lauren E. LePage, Esq.
State Director, NRA-ILA