

Dane Courtois
Hiram
LD 677

To the Honorable Members of the Legislature,

As a concerned Mainer, I stand in firm opposition to LD 677, which seeks to broaden the definition of "machine gun" and ban possession of rapid-fire devices. This bill threatens the rights of law-abiding citizens, undermines Maine's proud tradition of firearm ownership, and ignores the reality that an armed populace—including those with access to such devices—makes our society safer, not more dangerous.

Maine has a deep-rooted culture of responsible gun ownership, from hunters in Aroostook to sport shooters in York. Our state's constitutional carry law, enacted in 2015, reflects our trust in citizens to exercise their Second Amendment rights without undue restriction. LD 677 runs counter to this legacy by redefining "machine gun" in overly broad terms and outlawing rapid-fire devices—tools that many Mainers use lawfully for recreation, competition, and self-defense. These devices, like binary triggers or bump stocks, do not transform a firearm into a fully automatic weapon; they simply enhance the capabilities of semi-automatic firearms already legal under state and federal law. Banning them punishes innovation and personal freedom without evidence of a public safety crisis.

Proponents of LD 677 may claim it addresses a pressing danger, but Maine's reality tells a different story. Our state enjoys one of the lowest violent crime rates in the nation, and our concealed carry permit holders—many of whom own advanced firearms—commit crimes at negligible rates. Nationally, incidents involving rapid-fire devices are exceedingly rare, and when they do occur, they're tied to criminals, not law-abiding owners. Here in Maine, where law enforcement can take 20 minutes to reach a remote home in Washington County or a backroad in Oxford County, citizens rely on their own means of protection. Rapid-fire devices can level the playing field against multiple assailants, offering a critical edge in life-or-death situations.

More broadly, an armed society is a safer society—a principle LD 677 disregards. When law-abiding Mainers carry firearms, whether standard handguns or enhanced with rapid-fire capabilities, they deter crime. Look at states like Idaho or Wyoming, where permissive gun laws coexist with low crime rates: the presence of armed citizens discourages would-be offenders. In Maine, where drug trafficking and property crimes have crept into towns like Sanford and Rumford, allowing responsible adults to maintain their full defensive toolkit strengthens our communities. A hunter in Millinocket or a shop owner in Augusta with a rapid-fire device isn't a threat—they're a safeguard, ready to protect their families and neighbors if the worst occurs.

LD 677 also sets a dangerous precedent. By expanding the "machine gun" definition, it risks ensnaring legal firearms under vague new rules, creating confusion for owners and law enforcement alike. Maine's sheriffs and police, already stretched thin, don't need the burden of enforcing a law that targets the compliant rather than the criminal. And for what gain? No data shows rapid-fire devices driving crime here—our challenges lie elsewhere, in opioid deaths and economic struggles, not in the hands of lawful gun owners.

I urge you to reject LD 677. Maine thrives when we trust our people, not when we strip away their rights under the guise of safety. Let's keep our state a place where liberty and security go hand in hand, bolstered by citizens equipped to defend themselves and their communities. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Dane Courtois