

LD 805; An Act To Allow Municipalities To Prohibit Firearms at Voting Places

Senator Baldacci, Representative Matlack and Members of the Committee on State and Local Government

My name is Polly Haight Frawley and I live in Cumberland Maine. I am here in support of LD 805.

The Legislature's right to prohibit firearms in specified places is constitutional. It has enacted laws on this issue that apply state wide numerous times. For example, guns are not permitted in the State House. Guns are not permitted in schools. Guns are not permitted in residential treatment facilities.

Unlike these examples, LD 805 does not seek to impose a blanket state-wide prohibition but to provide municipal clerks, who know their communities best, the authority to bar firearms at polling places. The Maine constitution favors home rule and LD 805 is consistent with that principle.

During the last year we have seen that government buildings are not the safe places they were once thought to be. We have seen firearms used not to protect but to bully and intimidate.

I am not a gun owner, I was not raised with guns and there are none in my home. They intimidate me. The thought of standing in line to vote near a person carrying a gun frightens me effectively impacting my ability to exercise my First Amendment right. State law prohibits simple political speech within a certain perimeter of a polling place. Certainly it should authorize the prohibition of firearms at that same polling place if a municipal clerk so determines.

Individuals often claim they carry firearms to protect me, a member of the general public. However law enforcement has repeatedly said that when moving into a crisis, it is hard to tell law abiding gun carriers from

those wanting to commit violent acts. It confuses the situation for them when clarity of purpose should be tantamount.

Several states do not allow guns at the polls, notably Texas, Florida and Arizona, Louisiana, and Georgia; all have a long history of strong gun rights yet protect the right to vote without the intimidating presence of a firearm. Maine should provide the flexibility to municipal clerks to act as warranted.

Thank you.