

Kim True
Freeport

April 12, 2021

Committee on State and Local Government
Maine Legislature

Re: In SUPPORT of L.D. 805: An Act to Allow Municipalities to Prohibit Firearms at Voting Places

I am writing in support of L.D. 805, because I believe each Maine municipality should be able to determine for itself whether or not it is lawful on a designated election day for firearms to be carried into its voting places.

Tensions around elections have heightened in recent years. As a long-time poll watcher in Maine, I have observed an increasing climate of hostility develop among voters on election day as people wait in line to vote. During my stint as a poll watcher during the last national election, the air in the polling place felt at times like it was electrically charged. I heard numerous negative comments about the face mask requirement and the candidates. Many voters seemed angry. For the first time, I didn't feel completely safe being at the polling place. I felt intimidated by some of the voters who were wearing politically branded articles of clothing and seemed to be daring me to enforce electioneering rules. They appeared to me to be inviting confrontation, scrapping for a fight. Perhaps they were. On January 6, 2021, a confrontation exploded at the U.S. Capitol. It became clear to the world that there exists in America people who will go to any and all lengths, including violence, to hijack an election.

Poll workers and voters going to the polls are entitled to feel safe and be safe in the polls on election day. In light of recent events involving divisive elections and rampant gun violence, municipalities are right to examine if they are doing all they can to keep their polling places safe for their workers and voters. As the law in Maine exists today, municipalities are prohibited from banning guns in polling places. I believe that municipal officers should be free to decide if allowing guns into their community's polling places advances or detracts from their goal of keeping the polling places safe. It is conceivable that municipal officials in Dennistown, population 34, reasonably may decide something different from what is decided by municipal officials in the city of Portland.

Decisions involving the presence of guns in polling places are best made at the local level, by municipal officers who are intimately familiar with the town's public safety capabilities, prevailing local sentiment around the use and display of guns in public places, and other relevant factors. That is why the Maine Municipal Association supports L.D. 805 and why I do, too.

I urge you to join us in supporting this bill.

Respectfully,

Kim Anderson True
46 Cunningham Road
Freeport, Maine 04032