

My name is Sherri Simmons. My State Representative is Jennifer Stewart. Today I am here to call for a vote on the House Secure Storage bill (7373), and the House Assault Weapons bill (7217).

Like many here tonight, I am bewildered over the lack of *legislative action* on the Secure Storage bill, “*held for further study*” last year, and the Assault Weapons bill “*held for further study*” for 11 years!

For over a decade, *multitudes of* Rhode Islanders have come before this body to testify in favor of common-sense gun legislation. Police officers, elected officials, victims, and witnesses of gun violence have told their stories and expressed support for the Assault Weapons bill and the Secure Storage bill. The RI State Police reported a 41% increase in gun violence 2023. And we are ***all*** aware of at least four recent crimes in RI involving assault style weapons and/or large capacity magazines. Currently, the Assault Weapons bill has **37 cosponsors in the House. Eight members of *this* committee, a majority, have their names listed on the bill.** MA, NY, and CT have passed Assault Weapons bills, which undoubtedly protect RI citizens. Inexplicably House Leadership has denied our representatives the same opportunity by refusing to hold a vote on this bill.

Over 70% of RI voters support an Assault Weapons Ban and we deserve a vote. Leader Shekarchi wrote in his January Op Ed in the *Providence Journal* that he is, and I quote, “Proud of the transparency with which the House operates”, end quote. Refusing a vote on this bill allows the Leader and other members of the House, to hide from their constituents. I agree with the Leader. Transparency *is* important. RI voters deserve to know where their representatives stand on these bills. That is transparency. That is democracy. I ask each of you to speak with the Leader and demand a vote on these bills. We are 11 years past due.