

June 3, 2025

Subject: Opposed: H5436 Sub A

Chair Person Craven and House Judiciary Committee Members,

While I recognize that this bill has been reworked to remove mandatory firearm registration, I still write to you in opposition of it. I'm sure most of the arguments you hear, pro or con, focus on how passing this bill will make things better or worse, here and now. I hope to share a slightly different perspective that you truly consider the long-term implications of passing this bill. Whether or not someone can keep, pass down, or register their firearm is a distraction from the larger issue which is that it will forever prevent future Rhode Islanders from purchasing semi-automatic rifles (etc). This is a future altering decision that I know you and the members of your committee have not and will not take lightly.

As a somewhat new father, I am very concerned about the future but I recognize that we cannot control or know what it will bring. We do not have to go back very far in our lifetime to see how true this is. A little over ten years ago, when early versions of this bill were first introduced, if someone brought up half the things that have happened since they would be laughed out of the room. Election denying with protests and riots, government lockdowns, social unrest, vaccine mandates, rule by executive order, a world teetering on the edge of WW3, and a political environment where opponents are no longer just moral opposition but are referred to as enemies or worse. These are just SOME of the once unimaginable circumstances that have created our current reality.

With that said, how could anyone be certain that upending a centuries old constitutional right will not only be best for us now, but also for my children and their future kids, their kid's kids, and their kid's kids' kids? THAT is the gravity of your decision on H5436 as it not only infringes, but strips the right of future generations to arm themselves with a firearm reflective of their time. Even those who support this legislation cannot promise it will end mass shootings or reduce gun violence today but what it WILL do is undermine the very purpose of the 2nd Amendment and make future generations susceptible to tyranny and foreign invasion. Who are we to strip their rights because it is politically expedient to just "do something" now?

Article 1, Section 22 of the RI Constitution plainly states: "The right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." This was ratified in the 1840's by people who literally had arms borne against them in the "failed" Dorr Rebellion so they had every reason to restrict firearm access or simply leave it out of the RI Constitution almost 200 years ago. Instead, they likely recognized this was a right passed onto them that is the foundation of all rights and needed to be unequivocally preserved.

I would like to dissect and share in further detail why I oppose this bill, but I doubt anyone has read this far and I'm sure my other sentiments will be shared in other testimony.

I wish I had the answer to help prevent the atrocities committed with firearms. Personally, I think there are some good ideas on both sides but with neither side willing to budge and legislation and rhetoric becoming increasingly vindictive, I do not have much confidence there is desire to accomplish anything other than scoring campaign contributions.

I realize and am thankful that the thought of taking up arms due to foreign invasion or tyrannical abuse seems outlandish in our lifetime but the point I am trying to make is we can't predict the crises we will face, let alone those that my kids and future generations will endure. I implore you, please do not lose sight of this and know that your decisions on 2A matters today WILL determine the fate of liberty and freedom for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration,
Samuel Vito- Foster, RI