



HB 1911 by White
Homeland Security and Public Safety
3/28/17

Good morning. My name is Andrea Brauer. I am Executive Director of Texas Gun Sense (TGS), and I am testifying against HB 1911.

TGS is a statewide nonprofit and nonpartisan organization advocating for common sense, evidence-based policies to reduce gun injuries and deaths. We are not an anti-gun group, and we respect the Second Amendment. We also believe that more can be done to keep high-risk individuals and children from accessing firearms and to reduce the number of lives lost to gun violence. Our goal is to find common ground and ultimately to save lives.

We believe HB 1911, which seeks to remove the licensing requirement for carrying a handgun, will make Texans less safe.

First, TGS takes issue with the notion that this proposal would create “constitutional carry.” Texans already enjoy great freedom under the U.S. Constitution, through the Second Amendment right to gun ownership and carrying weapons. Basic protections and oversight designed to keep guns out of the wrong hands and calling for a minimum level of training are consistent with the “well regulated” environment as stated in the Second Amendment. The courts have upheld a great variety of laws regulating gun ownership and the carrying of weapons.

Second, the system is not broken. Texas for over 20 years has successfully carried out a permit program for citizens to carry a concealed handgun. With over a million Texans now holding such a permit, there is no argument that four hours of training and showing competency with a handgun is stopping citizens from exercising their Second Amendment right.

This bill would eliminate all training and competency requirements. Time and again the gun industry and lobby have touted themselves as voices for responsible gun ownership and training. Even the National Rifle Association on its website states, "At the NRA, firearm training and education is

paramount." Licensure has ensured that individuals who choose to arm themselves in public have at least the basic skill level needed to safely carry their weapons and avoid injury to themselves and others. The standards of licensure and the safety records of license holders that have been used by members of the Legislature and gun rights advocates to argue for the dramatic easing of gun safety restrictions over the last few sessions. Removing all requirements now would make our communities vulnerable to gun violence in an unprecedented way.

This bill makes the License to Carry optional. That would put individuals in the position of analyzing complex legal requirements and determining their own eligibility. Leaving this analysis to individuals will lead to widespread confusion and misunderstandings, and make law enforcement's job more difficult as they interact with people who carry in public.

DPS provides a succinct, one-page form and online option for easy application and renewal. The process allowed DPS to determine that 3,000 applicants or licensees should be denied, revoked or suspended in 2015, which enabled the agency to keep the public safe.

For these reasons, many law enforcement organizations are opposed to making the license to carry optional. As articulated by Kevin Lawrence, Executive Director of the Texas Municipal Police Association, "What is being called 'constitutional carry' is bad public policy, is bad for public safety, and would make the jobs of our law enforcement officers more difficult and exponentially more dangerous." Similarly, the governor of Montana in deciding to veto a similar proposal stated, "While I will fiercely defend the Second Amendment rights of our citizens, I cannot support an absurd concept that threatens the safety of our communities by not providing for the basic fundamentals of gun safety or mental health screening."

This legislation does not address any problem within current law, but rather creates new challenges and it threatens public safety.

Thank you for your time and your attention. I welcome your questions.

Sincerely,

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