

Ohioans

For Safe Communities

Through Gun Violence Prevention

Chair Roegner,
Ranking Member Lipps,
Members of Ohio House Committee on Federalism and Interstate Relations,

Ohioans for Safe Communities urges the Committee to vote against HB 142. This bill would needlessly endanger our law enforcement officers for the sake of providing a minor convenience to concealed carry permit holders.

The list of law enforcement organizations opposing this bill is long. Their testimony speaks to their commitment to honor CCW rights while protecting their officers in the field. The notion that law enforcement officers already know that a CCW permit holder is in a stopped vehicle before they approach the vehicle is clearly mistaken.

There can be no question that the proliferation of concealed carry has increased the likelihood that an officer regularly confronts armed civilians, and there can be no question that our law enforcement officers increasingly encounter stressful and dangerous situations involving the presence of firearms.

This bill appears in the Ohio Legislature at a time when, after many years of gun rights expansion Ohio experienced its worst gun violence toll since the passage of concealed carry in 2004. The latest figures (2015) show a gun violence death toll of 1,397, whereas in 2004 the death toll was 1,036. That's an increase of 35% in 12 years (population grew approximately 2% in that period). Ohio's gun violence death rate is now above the national average (11.9 per 100,000 Ohio compared to 11.1 US).ⁱ Ohio's experiment with lax gun laws is a failure.

While it may be true that CCW permit holders are overwhelmingly law abiding, this is little comfort to law enforcement officers who make thousands of traffic stops. This bill would negate a key provision of our concealed carry statute, the duty to assist law enforcement officers by revealing the presence of a firearm, thus reducing the likelihood of a surprising and stressful discovery that a firearm is present. We urge the defeat of this unnecessary and dangerous bill.

ⁱ Note that Ohio gun deaths increased by 15% from 2014-2015, while US gun deaths increased by 8%. See CDC data at <http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/ohio>, and for 2014-15 data see <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/ohio/ohio.htm>