

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 defeat of House Bill 233. This bill would reduce the safety of Ohio citizens and severely reduce the rights of citizens, businesses, and organizations to create and maintain gun free areas in our state. This bill would continue the expansion of gun owners' and gun carriers' rights when our state is faced with a rising toll from gun violence.

The bill's premise is the disproved notion that gun free areas are targets of armed criminals. The bill is also predicated on the belief that the presence of armed civilians reduces the likelihood of violent crime in any location. These theories have been discredited numerous times by healthcare and academic studies, the most recent of which found:

New research on mass shootings involving six or more victims murdered that occurred in the United States from 1966 to through June 2016 contradicts these claims. Only 12% of these shootings took place, in whole or in part, in a truly gun-free zone (no armed security or police or armed civilians) and 5% in a gun-restricting zone (civilian gun possession prohibited). A separate study of mass shootings involving four or more fatalities, that included domestic incidents during 2009-2015, found that only 13% occurred in a gun-free or gun-restricting zone. Successful civilian uses of guns to stop a mass shooting were incredibly rare and about as common as armed civilians being shot while attempting to respond to mass shooting incidents. Furthermore, the data show no evidence that (right to carry) laws – which, it is argued, lead to more armed citizens ready to defend against a mass shooting – reduce mass shootings or the number of people shot in those incidents.ⁱ

The bill would neuter current law allowing for the prohibition of carrying firearms in various locations. The bill is an outrageous attempt to effectively eliminate “prohibited places” by simply re-defining “prohibited.” Under HB 233, establishments that prohibit firearms would be better labelled ‘Don’t Get Caught Zones.’ By the very nature of concealed carry, the odds of a concealed carrier being ‘caught’ while in a prohibited place are small. And this law would add a new challenge to the owner/operator of the establishment. It would no longer suffice to put up a “No Guns” sign; now the owner/operator would need to also *identify and confront* the carrier. Most likely this is a scenario in which an unarmed proprietor or staff person would be forced to confront a person armed with a deadly weapon. *Only after refusing to leave (thereby escalating the confrontation) would the carrier be in violation of the law and subject to arrest.*

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).ⁱⁱ

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It is time to reject the never-ending call from gun rights advocates for unrestricted expansion of the armed population and the number of places where arms may be carried. This bill violates the rights of Ohio citizens to maintain and enjoy places free from guns and their right to enforce such restrictions on gun carriers. Accordingly we urge you to vote against HB 233.

ⁱ Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research, “Firearms on College Campuses: Research Evidence and Policy Implications,” October 15, 2016, http://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-gun-policy-and-research/_pdfs/GunsOnCampus.pdf

ⁱⁱ 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>