



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OHIO**

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Testimony on
House Bill 228
Rosie Craig, LWV Ohio Gun Control Specialist
The House Committee on Federalism and Interstate Relations
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Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Becker, Ranking Member Leland, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Sub. House Bill 228. My name is Rosie Craig and I am the Gun Control Specialist for the League of Women Voters of Ohio. I am offering testimony in opposition to Sub HB 228. The League of Women Voters of Ohio has concerns about the effect of this bill on public health and safety, particularly within the existing environment of gun regulations in Ohio.

Our chief concern with Sub HB 228 is its provisions related to self-defense, commonly known as “stand-your-ground.” Sub HB 228 would lift the duty for a gun carrier to retreat from threatening situations, and allow someone who uses lethal force to “get off the hook” more easily when it comes to facing a judge. The duty to retreat would be removed anywhere one has a right to be, which expands the “castle doctrine” provision passed in 2008 to virtually *everywhere*.

Sub HB 228 would reduce penalties for concealed carry (CCW) violations, and reduce the penalties for improperly handling firearms in a motor vehicle. There is no evidentiary research that supports a need for these changes so the law should remain as-is.

Sub HB 228 would add changes to CCW signage requirements, which adds confusion to an ever changing set of CCW regulations for those people and institutions want to say “NO” to CCW on their premises.

In conjunction with House Bill 233, which passed the Ohio House of Representatives in July 2017, this bill would give CCW licensees a framework to errantly *carry* AND errantly *use* their guns with significantly less penalty.

States that have enacted “stand-your-ground” laws have seen increases in gun homicide even as overall violent crime rates in their states have gone down. Essentially, these laws lower the cost of using lethal force, and studies show that correlates with more of it.

(1)(2)

People may forget that the national movement, #BlackLivesMatter, started after the ‘not guilty’ verdict of George Zimmerman, acquitted of the 2012 shooting death of an unarmed black teenager, Trayvon Martin. The Travon Martin case raises concerns that racially motivated violence might increase with these laws.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio sees Sub HB 228 as part of a trend of this legislature enacting increasingly lax CCW laws. We have concerns with policy supported only by anecdotal suppositions instead of methodical research under scrutiny of peer review. Ohio law does not allow public audit or research into the CCW licensing system. Since 2014, nearly 9,000 CCW licenses have been suspended or revoked. (3) What are the trends for alcohol abuse, domestic violence, suicide, intentional and/or unintentional deaths on the part of CCW licensees? Is it greater than in the general population? Are Ohioans safer because of CCW or does the widening presence of guns create an itch for someone to use one. Because research is blocked, no one can reliability answer these questions.

We are left to wonder why Ohioans are denied a right to verify whether those prohibited from carrying a concealed weapon errantly have a license. Without the ability to audit CCW data for suspensions and revocation, we undoubtedly have people in Ohio carrying concealed weapons who should not. We saw how errors in data reporting contributed to the 26 deaths and the injury of 20 others in a church shooting in Sutherland Springs, Texas because the shooter’s domestic violence convictions were not reported to the NICS

(National Instant Criminal Background Check System) data base.

I have attended CCW hearings since 2003. When the need for transparency has been debated, I have heard from witnesses and legislators alike that guns in the hands of indiscriminate individual gun owners are a patriotic necessity; a means to correct the overreaching arm of a tyrannical government. If this is the case, then why does the Ohio General Assembly pay the Ohio Highway Patrol to protect our legislators and their staff? After all, with this logic, why put a barrier between yourselves and those with a *legitimate grudge* against the government? If concealed weapons are so effective at self-defense, why don't legislators send the Ohio Highway Patrol elsewhere to protect more vulnerable citizens since you could all carry your concealed guns and be safe here?

We can only surmise that this legislative body fails in its duty to protect its citizens by refusing to enact legislative measures to rein in perpetrators of gun violence *before they start shooting*. Such legislation has been and is being introduced this session. In the past such bills have languished. Instead of and in response to the recent Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting which claimed the lives of 17 students and adults, this body should be passing legislation for background checks on gun purchases, reducing clip size and prohibiting military style features on a semi-automatic weapon, outlawing "bump stocks" an accessory which facilitates shooting up 10 rounds per second (4), safe storage legislation requiring adults to keep guns away from minors who should not have them, AND having for themselves legal liability consequences if they don't. They should be supportive of Governor Kasich's attempts to move the gun violence prevention debate in a better direction, including efforts to fix the reporting of data in the National Instant Criminal Background Check (NICS) for gun purchases and the enactment of so called "*Red Flag*" laws which would allow the temporary removal of guns from the possession of demonstrably dangerous people.

Taking these trends and issues into consideration, I urge members of the committee to vote against this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony, please feel free to contact LWV Ohio with any questions.

1. <https://www.npr.org/2013/01/02/167984117/-stand-your-ground-linked-to-increase-in-homicide>
2. <http://www.politifact.com/florida/statements/2017/mar/16/dennis-baxley/did-floridas-stand-your-ground-law-reduce-violent/>
3. <http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/Files/Publications-Files/Publications-for-Law-Enforcement/Concealed-Carry-Publications/Concealed-Carry-Statistics>
4. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2017/11/everything_we_know_about_the_sutherland_springs_shooter_an_ar_556.html