

Rev. T.J. Smith's Testimony

May 1, 2019 Hearing

Chairman Becker, Vice Chairman Stoltzfus, Ranking Member Miller and members of the House Federalism Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on this important legislation, House Bill 178.

My name is Timothy J. Smith and my wife and I live in Marion where we raised our four children. I am an ordained Anglican minister and a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and the U.S. Army Chaplain School, Ft. Jackson, S.C. I served the State of Ohio for 21 years as a correctional chaplain in adult male prison facilities. I now minister in Marion County working with addicts and probationers.

I stand today in support of Constitutional Carry legislation for three particular reasons, though of course there are many other reasons you will hear today.

First as an amateur theologian and church historian, I am well aware that the Founders of this Republic based their right to life and liberty doctrine on classical Christian anthropology. Our rights come from God. The human person is endowed from birth with these fundamental rights. And therefore possesses free will and moral responsibility. This means that self-defense is not only a right, but also a responsibility to protect the weak and to preserve and foster our own life, and the gifts we have all been given by God. A woman or man fully alive in Christ can and will exercise all of their human and spiritual gifts to a very high level. This includes the ability to prevent violence when possible, as well as the ability to end violent attacks upon the innocent when necessary. We have all lately become aware of this truism, "The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun".

And as an aside, note that my brothers and sisters of the faith who advocate so-called "Christian Pacifism" are misguided. They wish to restrict in the law the self preservation rights of Ohioans of all faiths, and those of no faith with an idiosyncratic view of total non-violence. Their views fly in the face of centuries of Christian doctrine on justified self defense.

Secondly, I support Constitutional Carry because of my exposure to violent criminals for two decades as a prison chaplain. The men whom I saw transformed by the Good News of Christ were often brutally honest in sharing about the violent and hateful course of their lives without God. Prisoners have shared with me statements such as "My best thinking brought me to prison", and, "I wasn't arrested, I was rescued", and "If not for prison, I would be dead by now". I have even had sex offenders confide in me that their addiction to pornography included viewing so called "snuff films", filmed live murders. Social degradation is real and I can personally attest to this. When I began my career as a chaplain in 1997,

felons would share that their grandmothers had taken them to church as a child and perhaps they needed to honor her memory by returning to the Lord. Twenty years later, many felons, when I ask them about possible faith heritage through a godly grandmother, will say something like, "Uh, no. My grandmother was a crack dealer". I tell this sad tale to remind us all that criminals have life trajectories about which we can scarcely conceive. In sum, criminals already have a form of "constitutional carry" in Ohio. It's called, "Don't follow the law and carry weapons at all times". How frequently do we read in the crime reports that those arrested for a charge are also charged with "Weapon Under Disability"? Meaning they already have a felony record preventing them from even owning a firearm, much less carrying concealed.

Finally, I stand in support of Constitutional Carry for a personal reason. On the night of September 11th - September 12th, 2018, my 23 year-old daughter Emily was abducted at gunpoint by an ex-boyfriend. In the middle of her 4-hour ordeal, about midnight, she texted me "Call the cops. He's got a gun". Emily's attacker saw her surreptitious use of the phone and assumed she had called the police. He became even more upset and said to her, "When the cops come through that door, I'm shooting them, killing you, and then shooting myself." Thank God, about 2:00 a.m. she was able to run from her apartment in a moment of distraction. In December, my daughter had to sit on the witness stand for almost two hours to assure that her gun-wielding attacker would be held responsible. And he was. Despite her struggles with debilitating anxiety attacks following this ordeal, Emily paid for and attended the State-mandated Concealed Carry course in order to feel safe when her attacker is released from prison.

Emily's attacker did not need this course to pick up a weapon and use it in the commission of this attack. He simply pulled the gun out of his backpack and put it in her face.

Please move this much needed Constitutional Carry bill forward, so that future crime victims are not more burdened than those who carry illegally every day in our State.

Thank you and may God bless you and guide your good work.

Chaplain Tim J. Smith, M.Div.

"It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men"

~ Frederick Douglass

Ask me about:

Released Time Bible Education, Scouting BSA, or Jail Chaplaincy!