

Ohio House Government Oversight Committee
HB 51 Opponent Testimony
Elizabeth Knighton
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Committee Chair Peterson, Ranking Member Forhan, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My family is one that has served our country well: I am a former Army wife (my husband is now honorably discharged and working as an engineer in Columbus having earned a Bronze Star in combat during Operation Iraqi Freedom), my brother-in-law is an active-duty Marine, my father-in-law is retired Air Force. We are familiar with gun use and gun ownership.

But, I'm here today to ask you to let this bill fall by the wayside, right here in committee. Today! Don't bring it up for a vote.

Consider this: As a United States Citizen who is also female, I have the right to vote. This right is guaranteed to me by the 19th Amendment. But even though this is my Constitutional right, I am only allowed to vote ONE time in each election. I am only allowed to vote in the state and precinct in which I reside. I cannot vote as many times as I please, or wherever I please, because it has been deemed best for the community as a whole for each person only to cast one ballot. In fact, I have to *register* in order to act upon my 19th Amendment right. I have to prove, through my government issued photo identification, who I am before I can act upon this right here in Ohio. There are *limits* upon my constitutional right to vote for the benefit of the community as a whole.

I also have the right to bear arms, guaranteed to me by the Second Amendment. And at the core of HB 51 today is the question of whether there can be *limits* placed upon my Second Amendment rights for the good of the community, state, and country as a whole. This bill would say no. It says that no one should be able to make me prove I am a law-abiding citizen in order to exercise my 2nd Amendment right. No federal background checks shall be required in the state of Ohio, and the state of Ohio itself does not require any background checks. This bill says that even if someone close to me is under a domestic violence restraining order, they could carry a concealed firearm, something currently prohibited by virtue of Ohio's current adoption of the federal gun disability list. This would go away upon enactment of HB 51. I could go on. I've read the bill, and so have you.

But here's the thing. If I exercise the heck out of my 19th amendment right and attempt to vote in every precinct all day next time there's an election, it's certainly illegal, and it might cause confusion, and some administrative headache, but that's it. Hopefully, I would suffer consequences if I did that. But if I pull my firearm and shoot someone, they most likely die. They certainly would be wounded and their life as they knew it is over. Gun deaths in Ohio have increased 50% since 2012. Gun *homicides* in Ohio increased 94% over that same period. Data show that where there are more guns, there are more deaths by guns. Where there are fewer laws to regulate guns, there are more guns, and more deaths by gun. So why would we want this in Ohio???

Fox News conducts a nation-wide poll every so many years, administered by the Beacon Research Group and Shaw & Co Research. Their most recent poll, in June 2022, found that 88% of people desired background checks for all firearm purchases. 81% wanted red flag laws that could identify people who were a danger to themselves or others and temporarily keep them from accessing firearms. – which HB 51 moves backward for Ohioans by removing our state from enforcing the federal gun disability list. Let me say that again: 88% wanted background checks, yet HB 51 would not allow us to enact the federal background check requirement.

If you are sitting here today planning to advance HB 51 out of committee, you want this bill to become the law of our state, I propose that you have forgotten your mandate. Your mandate is to serve the people of Ohio, who want common sense gun laws to protect us from those who would misuse their rights. Don't serve the 12%, who are the extremists and the gun industry itself. Remember that your mandate is to the regular Ohioans like my family of veterans and my three young children. Don't even bring this thing up for a vote.

Thank you.