

Dr. Terry Johnson

State Senator

14th Senate District



Sponsor Testimony

Senate Bill 279

Senate General Government Committee

October 14th, 2025

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 279.

Ohio's law enforcement officers are among the best trained and equipped individuals across the United States. The responsibilities of their job can often extend to times when they are off duty and simply acting as a member of the public. These individuals are invaluable to our society, whether they are in or out of uniform. I pose this question then, why would we ever want to restrict our law enforcement officers from carrying while off duty?

I plan to introduce legislation that will reform this oversight within the Ohio Revised Code in regard to businesses, state agencies, and political subdivisions. First, it will remove any reference to law enforcement "restrictive firearms carrying policies" still present within the ORC. Second, it includes punitive damages against businesses who may discourage off duty law enforcement officers from carrying as well as includes civil penalties. Finally, those same punitive damages and civil penalties will apply to the state agencies and political subdivisions themselves if they were to implement their own restrictive policies.

This legislation is preventative in nature, while also providing teeth to discourage any violation of the officer's duty to keep the peace, both on and off duty. The Ohio Attorney General has already made it clear that under Ohio law, public establishments cannot prohibit or restrict these officers whether or not they are working or in uniform.¹ I want to ensure that the possibility of any restrictions occurring is prevented, even from within a police department's own internal policies. Mind you, the firearms I refer to are the same as whatever these law enforcement officers have already been authorized and qualified to carry per the standards of their department/agency.

We live in dangerous times, where criminals and political extremists have become more likely to take innocent lives in the course of their affronts to lawful society. Should an off duty officer be present when such an event occurs, no one would be better qualified to put a quick end to the matter. When time is of the essence, when lives are on the line, I want our off duty police force empowered to act decisively. I believe this legislation is sensible and practical when it comes to our police officers and investigators. Their crucial role affords them a high degree of trust and responsibility within our society. We should encourage this while making sure nothing comes in their way to restrict the duties bestowed upon them.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have at this time.

¹ [Carrying Weapons and Firearms by Ohio Law Enforcement Officers in Public Establishments](#)