As Reported by the Senate Local Government Committee

136th General Assembly
Regular Session **S. B. No. 278**
2025-2026

Senator Johnson
Cosponsors: Senators O'Brien, Koehler, Manchester

To amend section 9.68 of the Revised Code to permit individuals to seek punitive or exemplary damages against municipal corporations that pass gun control measures.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO:

Section 1. That section 9.68 of the Revised Code be amended to read as follows:

Sec. 9.68. (A) The individual right to keep and bear arms, being a fundamental individual right that predates the United States Constitution and Ohio Constitution, and being a constitutionally protected right in every part of Ohio, the general assembly finds the need to provide uniform laws throughout the state regulating the ownership, possession, purchase, other acquisition, transport, storage, carrying, sale, other transfer, manufacture, taxation, keeping, and reporting of loss or theft of firearms, their components, and their ammunition, and knives. The general assembly also finds and declares that it is proper for law-abiding people to protect themselves, their families, and others from intruders and attackers without fear of prosecution or civil action for acting in defense of themselves or others. Except as specifically

provided by the United States Constitution, Ohio Constitution, state law, or federal law, a person, without further license, permission, restriction, delay, or process, including by any ordinance, rule, regulation, resolution, practice, or other action or any threat of citation, prosecution, or other legal process, may own, possess, purchase, acquire, transport, store, carry, sell, transfer, manufacture, or keep any firearm, part of a firearm, its components, and its ammunition, and any knife, without being required to have firearm liability insurance, and without being required to pay a fee for the possession of a firearm, part of a firearm, its components, its ammunition, or a knife. Any such further license, permission, restriction, delay, or process interferes with the fundamental individual right described in this division and unduly inhibits law-abiding people from protecting themselves, their families, and others from intruders and attackers and from other legitimate uses of constitutionally protected arms, including hunting and sporting activities, and the state by this section preempts, supersedes, and declares null and void any such further license, permission, restriction, delay, or process.

(B) A person, group, or entity adversely affected by any manner of ordinance, rule, regulation, resolution, practice, or other action enacted or enforced by a political subdivision in conflict with division (A) of this section may bring a civil action against the political subdivision seeking damages, including punitive or exemplary damages, from the political subdivision, declaratory relief, injunctive relief, or a combination of those remedies. Any damages awarded shall be awarded against, and paid by, the political subdivision. In addition to any actual damages awarded against the political subdivision and other relief provided with respect to such an

action, the court shall award reasonable expenses to any person, group, or entity that brings the action, to be paid by the political subdivision, if either of the following applies:

(1) The person, group, or entity prevails in a challenge to the ordinance, rule, regulation, resolution, practice, or action as being in conflict with division (A) of this section.

(2) The ordinance, rule, regulation, resolution, practice, or action or the manner of its enforcement is repealed or rescinded after the civil action was filed but prior to a final court determination of the action.

(C) As used in this section:

(1) The possession, transporting, or carrying of firearms, their components, their ammunition, or knives include, but are not limited to, the possession, transporting, or carrying, openly or concealed on a person's person or concealed ready at hand, of firearms, their components, their ammunition, or knives.

(2) "Firearm" has the same meaning as in section 2923.11 of the Revised Code.

(3) "Reasonable expenses" include, but are not limited to, reasonable attorney's fees, court costs, expert witness fees, and compensation for loss of income.

(4) "Knife" means a cutting instrument and includes a sharpened or pointed blade.

(5) "Arms" includes firearms and knives.

(6) "Firearm liability insurance" means a policy of liability insurance covering losses resulting from the use of a firearm owned by the person covered by the policy.

(D) This section does not apply to either of the following:

(1) A zoning ordinance that regulates or prohibits the commercial sale of knives, firearms, firearm components, or ammunition for firearms in areas zoned for residential or agricultural uses;

(2) A zoning ordinance that specifies the hours of operation or the geographic areas where the commercial sale of knives, firearms, firearm components, or ammunition for firearms may occur, provided that the zoning ordinance is consistent with zoning ordinances for other retail establishments in the same geographic area and does not result in a de facto prohibition of the commercial sale of knives, firearms, firearm components, or ammunition for firearms in areas zoned for commercial, retail, or industrial uses.

Section 2. That existing section 9.68 of the Revised Code is hereby repealed.