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Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee
Senate Bill 185 — Sponsor Testimony
Tuesday June 1, 2021

Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Veterans and Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 185.

Building off of the work former Senate President Larry Obhof put forth last general assembly, Senate Bill 185 will protect the rights of Ohioans to their firearms recognizing their natural right to protect themselves, recreate and feed their families under any declaration of emergency.

The Second Amendment does not have a pandemic/natural disaster clause, and this bill makes Ohioans safer by ensuring that they have the means to protect themselves and their families. However, of importance, this bill does not add any additional gun rights. It simply clarifies that people cannot have their rights taken away during a time of a declared emergency.

During the COVID pandemic, it became evident that local, state and federal governments have sweeping restrictive powers during a declared emergency. There was also widespread unrest during the summer, which was a cause for concern and led to a surge in first-time firearm owners as people sought to protect themselves and their families.

Fortunately, Ohio had a governor and legislature that did not use their power to infringe on Second Amendment rights. However, the same cannot be said for other states. Therefore, it is critical to proactively define the limits of the government's power to prevent future abuses.

One example of overreach during COVID can be seen from our neighbor to the north, where Governor Gretchen Whitmer closed down the ability of people to buy firearms as part of her COVID response. Furthermore, after doing so, she was quoted as saying she'd do it again.

The background of this legislation comes out of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when authorities began confiscating firearms without cause.

Realizing this overstep of authority, the Louisiana legislature shortly thereafter enacted a law to prevent the seizure of legally held firearms during a declared emergency.

Since then, this concept has spread, and currently 24 states have this type of law already on the books, including our neighboring states of Indiana, Kentucky, and West Virginia. It's time for Ohio to provide this level of protection as well.

Ohioans need to know their rights are protected under the Second Amendment of the US Constitution and Article 1, Section 4 of the Ohio Constitution, especially in the worst of times, and this bill provides that assurance.

Thank you once again, Chairman Hoagland and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to present this issue to you today. I will be glad to answer any questions at this time.