

December 9, 2021

Chairman Wilkin and Members of the Government Oversight Committee:

I write on behalf of the members of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc (NSSF) in support of House Bill 297. NSSF is the firearm industry trade association. The firearm industry currently creates over 12,000 jobs in Ohio and has an annual economic impact of over \$1.7 billion on the state. HB 297, the Firearm Industry Nondiscrimination Act would protect Second Amendment rights of Ohioans by requiring that government contracts in Ohio include verification that the company seeking the contract (1) does not have discriminatory policies against the firearm industry and (2) will not discriminate against the firearm industry for the duration of the contract.

In 2013, the Obama administration implemented an [initiative known as Operation Chokepoint](#). Under this initiative, the Department of Justice actively discouraged banks from doing business with industries like the firearm industry that the Obama administration opposed. This policy was swiftly discontinued by the Trump administration in 2017. Still, financial institutions have continued to discriminate against the firearm industry, not based on regular business criteria, but based on blatant political bias and a disdain for the freedoms guaranteed by the Second Amendment. To continue this troubling trend in ‘cancel culture,’ big corporations in other industries, especially in the tech space, have joined in discriminating against our industry. These practices don’t just threaten firearm manufacturers, they extend to members of our industry that sell hunting equipment, teach gun safety courses, and make gun safes.

Recognizing the threat of these anti-Second Amendment policies, several lawmakers and political bodies have pushed back. The Georgia and Wyoming legislatures recently passed laws to make it unlawful for financial institutions to discriminate against the firearm industry. Comparable federal legislation, the [Fair Access to Banking Act](#), has been introduced in both the US House and Senate this year. In 2018, the Louisiana State Treasurer [banned Citigroup Inc. and Bank of America](#) from state bond sales due to their discriminatory practices against the firearm industry. This year, the Louisiana treasurer took action to [ban JPMorgan from bond sales](#). President Trump’s Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) [finalized a rule in January 2021](#) to prohibit banking discrimination against lawful industries like the firearm industry. Unfortunately, the Biden administration put a hold on the implementation of that rule.

Unlike these other approaches, House Bill 297 would apply to all companies that seek state contracts instead of just financial institutions. It also differs in that it would not outlaw these discriminatory policies, but would simply require that companies that look to do business with the state, respect taxpayer Second Amendment rights. The Ohio Legislature [enacted nearly identical measures in 2016](#) to require that companies seeking state government contracts not have policies of boycott, or discrimination against Israel. Earlier this year, two other state legislatures, Louisiana and Texas, passed this same version of the Firearm Industry Nondiscrimination Act as the one before you today. It’s important to note that in both of those states, the state banking associations remained neutral and in Texas, the state banking association director [said](#) that this bill might give state banks “an opportunity for expansion in the public finance space”. The Louisiana bill was vetoed by their anti-Second Amendment governor, but the Texas bill was signed into law and went in effect on 9/1/2021.

States can decide who they do business with, in the same way that big corporations can. With HB 297, Ohio has an opportunity to join Texas in standing up for the Second Amendment rights of Ohioans and against the big corporations that seek to create public policy from the boardroom. Thank you for your consideration and to Representative Wiggam for introducing this bill.

Sincerely,


Christopher Lee

National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.