

Opposition Testimony to House Bill 272
House Government Oversight Committee
Andrea Kovesdi
October 31, 2023

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas and Ranking Member Humphrey thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to House Bill 272. My name is Andrea Kovesdi and I am a lifelong Ohioan.

There are good reasons why one is not permitted to carry a weapon into a building in which a courtroom is located. Chair Peterson stated in the proponent hearing last week that court proceedings are “often adversarial” and that “emotions MAY run higher there than what the planning commission decides that day”.

A simple google search for shootings in municipal buildings will show that emotions can run high even in places where “menial” local government business takes place. One such example took place in August 2013 in Ross Township, Pennsylvania when a 59 year old man who had a long running dispute with local officials over zoning and sewer issues burst into the township’s monthly supervisors’ meeting in Saylorsburg, Pa., firing a rifle, and a minute later returning with a .44 Magnum revolver, killing three. In all, he fired 28 rounds at the 15 to 18 people inside the room at the time. One of the dead was David Fleetwood, Ross Township’s Zoning Officer. After he was arrested, the perpetrator told officers that he had planned the attack so that as many of the township’s officials as possible would be in one place. He told officers, “I wish I had killed more of them,”.

This is only one example but that simple google search revealed four different instances where shootings took place in municipal buildings leaving 23 people dead and others injured. In 2008, a 52 year old man with a long running dispute against city officials shot seven and killed six in Kirkwood, Missouri. Five of those killed were shot in council chambers where a city council meeting was taking place. Two police officers and the mayor were among the dead. The other two shootings were instances of workplace violence where a city employee turned his gun on his co-workers due to “perceived workplace grievances”. From all of these examples, it is clear that tempers can flare even in places where we might not expect them to and the results are often deadly when a firearm is involved.

I can only presume that the supporters of this bill believe that they would be able to prevent tragedies such as these from happening because they would be armed. There have been instances of armed bystanders saving the day by stopping an armed gunman. But, those are few and far between. Bystanders that intervene put themselves

at risk of being killed. Such was the case with Aaron Salter Jr., an armed security guard and retired policeman with more than 30 years experience. Mr. Salter was killed after shooting at the gunman at a Tops Supermarket in Buffalo in May 2022. The gunman who was wearing body armor that could not be penetrated by the bullets from Mr. Salter's weapon went on to kill 10 people and injure 2 others. Armed bystanders that intervene have also been shot and killed by law enforcement who come on the scene and mistake them for the "bad guy with a gun".

I know that the supporters of this bill believe that it serves to clarify that they have a right to remain armed when visiting a building such as Lebanon city hall. While it is true that "qualifying adults" have a right to bear arms, I would expect that the members of this body understand that that right must not always go unfettered for the safety of those that you were elected to serve.

For all of these reasons, I urge you to carefully consider the likely danger HB272 might bring to a community near you and vote no when given the chance.