

Dear Judiciary Committee,

As a Gun Owner I fully support the Second Amendment. As a resident of South Carolina I can not support the proposed changes to our current Conceal Carry Regulations. We do have an opportunity to set a new bar for Gun Rights, Public Safety, and Responsible Stewardship of the Second Amendment but I caution that these proposals are unlikely to do that.

I applaud the thousands of South Carolina Gun Owners who will never misuse our Second Amendment privileges. Residents who will never be in the News for being the perpetrator of tragedy or find themselves in legal jeopardy through callousness or ignorance. We must acknowledge however that for a significant minority of Gun Owners firearms proficiency and understanding of the laws defining the appropriate use of a firearm, for all practical purposes end at the gun store cash register.

As we increase their numbers so too the risk to public safety.

There are multiple categories of intended use for a firearm. Some strictly own for hunting. Others enjoy target shooting or any of the various forms of shooting sports. All of these activities require a respect and appreciation for the power of guns in general and more than a passing understanding of their safe operation.

The Carrying of a firearm for Self Defense presents the need for an expanded skill set. One that takes into account a broad variety of circumstances likely to be encountered by the individual who chooses this lifestyle. One also needs a good understanding of firearms law. Really good. We have the right to own a firearm for any number of purposes. No one has a right to use one. That is a choice and will have to be defended often at great expense.

I praise our States current Conceal Carry Permit requirement. I have gone through the program and found it a foundational experience upon which to build my skills as a CCWP Holder and practitioner of the ownership of a firearm specifically for Self Defense. As you may guess I feel that in too many cases even this is not enough to prepare for the chaos that usually arises in any situation in which one would feel motivated to draw their weapon. And that's what it is. A weapon.

To be a Self Defender is an endeavor one should not undertake without serious consideration. It should never be the intent to appear ominous or threatening. What marginal benefit may be gained by telegraphing to those around you that you are armed must be weighed against the loss of the element of surprise afforded by concealment.

A responsible Gun Owner does not draw a firearm unless they intend to use it.

This is a crucial point!

The act in itself is a signal to whoever is the intended target. Assuming the target, in their (the target's) opinion was doing nothing wrong it is now they who have met the legal definition of "Being in fear for one's life." After all, someone is threatening them with a gun. Under our proposed changes as long as they have practiced their skills and can deploy their firearm more rapidly in response to this clear and present danger they will respond first and the Lawyers get to clean up the mess. Is this to be our future?

On the Racial front there will be those who choose to wear their firearm openly for no other reason than to send a clear message to those by whom they feel threatened. We can not ignore our State's history. I can only imagine that as one group opts for this manner of expression an equivalent number in other communities will respond in kind. This begs the question, What could go wrong?

As a political matter we place our communities at risk by legalizing the gathering of armed protestors regardless of affiliation.

I leave it to those in the business community to argue the potential impact Open Carry may or may not have on SC tourism revenue. I'm here to talk about the people who will be impacted.

At the least these motions should be tabled in favor of a serious study to determine the likely outcomes should they pass. Preferably a study that would include the impact of requiring additional education and practical skill training for anyone who wishes to carry a gun in public. I'm confident there would be financial and Public Safety benefits.

As it is each year numbers of individuals demonstrate poor stewardship of the Second Amendment. Their choices lead to negligent discharge events often with tragic results. I would include consideration of the consequences of poor storage methods as well. Leading not only to unauthorized access by children and emotional family members but to theft thereby placing our entire State at risk. Nor can we overlook the effect of ignorance on an individual's ability to make appropriate choices. Brandishing can place someone at risk of serious legal fallout. The consequences of which can be as devastating as a fatality. I spoke with one of my State Reps about a year ago about this very thing. His response was

“The problem is that people are basically good. They just get into trouble through not knowing what the Law is.”

Providing even more room to make mistakes is nothing short of legislative negligence.

In closing I will simply state that my right to own a firearm is more at risk from uneducated and irresponsible gun owners whose continued actions swell the ever growing ranks of those who would vote to oppose gun ownership. Can we blame them?

I repeat; We have an opportunity to set a new bar for Gun Rights, Public Safety, and Responsible Stewardship of the Second Amendment. The question is will we be up to the task?

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