



VALERIE J. LONGHURST
Majority Leader
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
15th District

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE OF DELAWARE
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

COMMITTEES
Ethics, Chair
House Administration, Chair
House Rules, Chair
Gaming & Parimutuels
House Manufactured Housing

House Administration Committee Meeting Minutes

1.22.20

Chair Longhurst called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m. Members present included Vice-Chair Mitchell, and Reps. Short, and Dukes. Speaker Schwartzkopf joined shortly following the call to order. For a list of guests present, please see the attendance list below.

Chair Longhurst reviewed the guidelines for public comment.

Chair Longhurst introduced **HB 318, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE EDUCATION.**

Representative Heffernan discussed the specifics of HB 318, including the benefits of including instruction about the Holocaust in the public curriculum. She also touched on her personal connection to the bill. Additionally, she mentioned that there had been discussion with the Department of Education (DOE) and that local school districts, rather than DOE, would set these curricula.

Chair Longhurst opened the floor for public comment.

Jacob Truitt spoke about the importance, in modern times, to be aware of such events as the Holocaust and expressed support for the bill.

Steve Gonzer representing the Halina Wind Preston Holocaust Education Committee, expressed support for the bill. The committee he represented was founded by two survivors of the Holocaust whose mission was to educate and spread awareness about the Holocaust in an effort to prevent similar events from happening again. He also discussed a documentary he created which involved interviewing many Delawareans with direct personal connection to the Holocaust, as well as his personal connection to the event.

Robert Overmiller expressed full support for HB 318.

Carroll Boone expressed support but added that victims of all oppressive acts should be considered in such bills.

Representative Short briefly commented on the importance of the bill to Rep. Heffernan and stated his own respect for the bill. He acknowledged that HB 318 was focused on a particular issue, but that bills addressing similar issues could be expected in the near future.

Chair Longhurst requested a motion.



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A motion was made by Rep. Short and seconded by Speaker Schwartzkopf to release HB 318 from committee.; motion carried. Yes = 5 (Short, Schwartzkopf, Longhurst, Mitchell, and Dukes); No = 0; Absent = 0. HB 318 was released from committee with a F = 0, M = 5, U = 0 vote.

Chair Longhurst introduced **SB 198, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 9 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO A KENT COUNTY LODGING TAX.** Rep. Bush, the sponsor of the bill, was unable to attend the committee meeting. Speaker Schwartzkopf explained that the bill would repeal the authority granted to Kent County Levy Court to impose a lodging tax to benefit the Kent County Regional Sports Complex Corporation, also known as DE Turf. He added that Kent County Levy Court was originally granted the authority in the first session of the 150th General Assembly.

Chair Longhurst opened up the floor for public comment. Seeing none, she requested a motion.

A motion was made by Rep. Mitchell and seconded by Rep. Short to release SB 198 from committee; motion carried. Yes = 5 (Mitchell, Short, Longhurst, Schwartzkopf, and Dukes); No = 0; Absent = 0. SB 198 was released from committee with a vote of F = 0, M = 5, U = 0.

Chair Longhurst introduced **HB 277, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 11 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO FIREARMS.**

Chair Longhurst discussed the details of the bill, including the establishment of the crimes of possession of an unfinished firearm frame or receiver with no serial number, possession of and manufacturing a covert or undetectable firearm, possession of and manufacturing an untraceable firearm, manufacturing or distributing a firearm using a three-dimensional printer, and the possession of a firearm frame or receiver with a removed, obliterated, or altered serial number. Chair Longhurst also mentioned that the legislation would not apply to members of military and police bodies authorized to carry such weapons. She concluded her remarks by discussing her consultations with the National Rifle Association (NRA) about language regarding a possible amendment.

Chair Longhurst opened the floor for public comment.

Mara Gorman of Moms Demand Action expressed support for HB 277 and requested committee members release the bill from committee. Ms. Gorman submitted her testimony to the record and it can be viewed in full in 1.22.20 Administration Mara Gorman Remarks.



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Carroll Boone questioned the relevance of the bill in terms of personal liberty. He expressed belief that the bill infringed upon the ability of the individual to be an entrepreneur.

Executive Director Traci Murphy of the Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence expressed support for HB 277. She also expressed her belief that she and the coalition were only a small fraction of a large proportion of Delaware's population who support commonsense legislation. She also expressed gratitude to the members of the committee who supported the bill and asked all of the members to consider supporting HB 277.

Terry Baker stated his opposition of the bill, citing the Constitution and asserting that the term "ghost guns" is a fanciful term used to disguise the purpose of the bill. He asserted that law-abiding citizens should be left alone and described his observation of the country headed down a bad path.

Wyatt Patterson, president of March for Our Lives Delaware, expressed support for the bill. She expressed that there is no "valid" reason for anyone to need to assemble a gun at home and presented statistics in support of the bill.

David Skinner opposed HB 277 and expressed that the bill did nothing but take away guns.

Bruce Bolander expressed support for the bill on behalf of the Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice. He offered statistics regarding how the African American population is disproportionately affected by gun violence and mentioned Justice Scalia's stance about "reasonable regulations". His testimony was submitted to the record and can be read in full in 1.22.20 Administration Bruce Bolander Remarks.

Denise Clendenning opposed the bill, stating a need for the stop of the attack on the Second Amendment, as well as asserting that the presence of guns is not the problem in Delaware and that it is a constitutional right for citizens to own firearms.

George Higgins stated his support for the bill. He asserted that it is irresponsible for the focus to be solely on whether issues of safety are affecting Delaware directly right now. He also thanked the committee for bringing the issue to a committee meeting.

Jeff Hague, on behalf of the Delaware State Sportsmen's Association and the NRA thanked Chair Longhurst and committee members for their consideration of amendments discussed as well as the recognition that federal law discusses covert firearms. However, he also expressed his disappointment that the bill is regulating the object in gun violence, i.e. the gun, rather than the



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person. He felt that gun violence will not be stopped by focusing on the object, and advocated for a focus on the person.

Dennis Greenhouse, on behalf of Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence, discussed the definition of “ghost guns” as well as the recent history related to such firearms. He also stated that these covert firearms bypass Delaware manufacturers who follow the law and described HB 277 as commonsense legislation.

Matt Caporaso expressed his opposition to this bill, questioning why military and other individuals should be exempt from such bills. He expressed an inability to see how this bill will prevent violent offenses and defended personal liberty.

Anne Powell expressed her support and stated that while the legislation was new to Delaware, the problem of covert firearms is not. She asked for the committee to vote to release HB 277.

Scott Kidner of the National Shooting Sports Foundation thanked the sponsor for working with them regarding their concerns with HB 277.

Donna Shand on behalf of Delaware United discussed the details of HB 277 and recent history regarding “ghost guns” and dangers associated with those who utilize them. She urged the committee to release HB 277. Her full testimony can be viewed in 1.22.20 Administration Donna Shand Remarks.

Mitchell Denham expressed his opposition to the bill and relayed a personal story related to how he obtained his degree in a firearm-related trade, arguing that the bill did not take into consideration the details of what it takes to pursue the hobby or professions related to firearms, the cost associated, and the labor it takes to craft a firearm. He also stated that criminals generally would not have the time or technology to operate such things.

Jack Guerin on behalf of the League of Women Voters expressed support for HB 277. He discussed the definition of ghost guns and a recent event related to such machines which occurred in Newark, Delaware. He also described the “thriving market” that now exists for unfinished and unmarked firearms and urged the committee to vote for the release of HB 277. His full testimony can be viewed in 1.22.20 Administration Jack Guerin Remarks.

Molly Keogh on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Delaware Advocacy Network expressed support for the bill, citing that while the creation of the firearms was originated by hobbyists, it has become popular among persons with violent criminal histories and other violent individuals.



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She urged the committee to vote yes in support of HB 277. Her full testimony can be viewed in 1.22.20 Administration Molly Keogh Remarks.

Ken Jones expressed that the bill was making law-abiding citizens such as himself into criminals and he opposed the bill. His full testimony can be viewed in 1.22.20 Administration Ken Jones Remarks.

Legislative Liaison Sergeant Darren Lester of the Delaware State Police addressed the committee and discussed the dangers and definition of ghost guns. He expressed the power of tracing firearms for law enforcement purposes. Covert, unidentifiable firearms do not allow for tracing by law enforcement and are often undetectable by standard metal detectors. He stated that these firearms are a threat to public safety. He emphasized the dangers of these types of firearms in the hands of individuals who have not, and potentially could not, pass a background check for the ability to possess firearms.

Bill Sharp expressed opposition to the bill. He questioned the legislation's motivations and cited the constitution and stifling of personal liberty.

Lunea Goddess of the Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence discussed recent events involving covert firearms in Virginia and expressed support for HB 277. She also asserted that Delaware citizens would support it broadly.

Jacob Truitt expressed opposition to the bill, citing the assignment of the bill to the House Administration Committee as proof that it was not seen as an issue of public safety but of control.

Chief Deputy Attorney General Alex Mackler of the Department of Justice (DOJ) expressed strong support of the bill on behalf of the Attorney General and DOJ. He also thanked the sponsor and the House attorney for considering their notes regarding the bill.

Richard Bishop expressed opposition to HB 277. He questioned how the bill would stop criminals from perpetrating the same crimes.

Chair Nadine Frost of the New Castle County Libertarian Party opposed HB 277. She also discussed her personal experience as a survivor of domestic abuse and stated that gun control laws disproportionately affect women and minorities. She discussed the perceived irony of a Holocaust bill being discussed in the same meeting and that gun safety should also be taught in schools.



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Paul Johnston expressed his opposition to the bill. He stated that this bill would not stop criminals and that it has already been ruled on federally. He felt that time should be spent enforcing the laws on the books and stopping criminals, rather than making criminals out of law-abiding citizens.

Brett Burdge expressed disappointment in some language in the bill, saying it conflates types of weapons unnecessarily. He also cited the lack of use of three-dimensionally printed or otherwise complexly manufactured guns and discussed a grandfather clause. He asked for HB 277 not to be released from committee.

Rep. Short asked that Chair Longhurst delay release the bill from committee in light of additional amendments that may help to reach some common ground between the caucuses.

Chair Longhurst commented that she would like to release the bill.

Rep. Short asked when the effective date of the bill would be.

Chair Longhurst stated the bill would be effective sometime in July.

Rep. Short expressed that he thought the bill was important but requested a delay in releasing it from committee.

A motion was made by Speaker Schwartzkopf and seconded by Rep. Mitchell to release HB 277 from committee; motion carried. Yes = 3 (Schwartzkopf, Mitchell, and Longhurst); No = 0; Abstained = 2 (Short and Dukes). HB 277 was released from committee with a F=0, M=3, U=0 vote.

Chair Longhurst adjourned the meeting at 3:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Pepper Chesser

Attendance List:

Mara Gorman | Moms Demand Action

Carroll Boone



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Traci Murphy | Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence

Terry Baker

Wyatt Patterson | March for Our Lives Delaware

David Skinner

Bruce Bolander | Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice

Denise Clendenning

George Higgins

Jeff Hague | Delaware State Sportsmen's Association and the NRA

Dennis Greenhouse | Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence

Matt Caporaso

Anne Powell

Scott Kidner | National Shooting Sports Foundation

Donna Shand | Delaware United

Mitchell Denham

Jack Guerin | League of Women Voters

Molly Keogh | Unitarian Universalist Delaware Advocacy Network

Ken Jones

Sgt. Darren Lester | Delaware State Police

Bill Sharp

Lunea Goddess | Delaware Coalition Against Gun Violence

Jacob Truitt

Alex Mackler | Department of Justice

Rich Bishop



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