

Chair Prozanski and Members of the Committee,

Although good intentions spearhead the efforts for all gun control regulations; logical and statistical counter-evidence provide that the ability of a law-abiding citizen to carry protection is not only a Constitutional right, but also a preventative measure that saves lives. SB 554 would restrict good samaritans from not only protecting themselves, but our communities at large. In a current world situation that has only highlighted the need for individuals to be able to protect themselves and their families, we would be doing a disservice by stripping anyone of this inalienable right.

In 2008, the Supreme Court of the United States decided District of Columbia v. Heller, establishing that the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution guaranteed an individual right to keep and bear arms in defense of oneself.

Clark Neily, an attorney for Dick Heller in this case, has said regarding Heller: America went over 200 years without knowing whether a key provision of the Bill of Rights actually meant anything. We came within one vote of being told that it did not, notwithstanding what amounts to a national consensus that the Second Amendment means what it says: The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. Taking rights seriously, including rights we might not favor personally, is good medicine for the body politic, and Heller was an excellent dose.

During Reconstruction, several states, especially Southern states, passed laws banning concealed carry. These laws were often aimed at disarming African-Americans, and though they did not explicitly say so because of the 14th Amendment, were not to be enforced against whites.

Rivers H. Buford, associate justice of the Florida Supreme Court, said that the Florida law banning concealed carry, "the original Act of 1893 ... was passed for the purpose of disarming the negro laborers ... and to give the white citizens in sparsely settled areas a better feeling of security. The statute was never intended to be applied to the white population and in practice has never been so applied. ... It is a safe guess to assume that more than 80% of the white men living in the rural sections of Florida have violated this statute. It is also a safe guess to say that not more than 5% of the men in Florida who own pistols and repeating rifles have ever applied to the Board of County Commissioners for a permit to have the same in their possession and there has never been, within my knowledge, any effort to enforce the provisions of this statute as to white people, because it has been generally conceded to be in contravention to the Constitution and non-enforceable if contested."

Discrimination against law-abiding citizens for upholding their rights to protect themselves based on the fabricated fears of a select few are never warranted.

Civil unrest and terrorist events recently have had a profound influence on the mindset of the public as many have realized that local, state, and federal government is unable to protect the masses when disaster strikes. People are now more aware of the crime trends in their own communities than in decades past due to our new technologies. Thus, many millions have embraced their own security measures. Carrying a concealed firearm isn't just a status symbol or political statement. It's a statistically proven method of reducing your likelihood of being the next victim of a violent crime.

Every multiple-victim public shooting in the U.S. in which more than three people have been killed since at least 1950 has taken place where citizens are not allowed to carry their own firearms.

SB 554 would restrict CHL holders from exercising their licensed rights and the ability to save themselves and serve others. It would also punish them with a felony for it. The punishment does not equate the "crime" of lawfully exercising licensee abilities. Thank you.