



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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TO: The Honorable Senator Kimberley Rosen
The Honorable Representative Lori Fowle, Co-chairs
Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public
Safety Committee

DATE: April 13, 2015

RE: LD 652 An Act to Authorize the Carrying of Concealed Handguns without a
Permit

Please accept this written testimony in opposition to LD 652.

In 1990, the League of Women Voters adopted the following position on gun control: *The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety. The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal.*

LD 652 would remove the requirement for gun safety training before carrying a hidden, loaded gun in public. It would also remove the background check that is part of the concealed weapons permitting process. This goes against the League's position on gun control. Please note that ours is not an anti-gun position but rather a pro-safety position. In addition to teaching how to safely handle a gun, gun safety training courses discuss the legal ramifications of shooting a gun in public, under what circumstances you are legally allowed to use a gun in public, and where you can and cannot carry a concealed weapon in Maine. The background check assures that felons and other prohibited people will not get legal permission to carry hidden guns in public. This is especially important in a state that allows for the private sale of guns where no background check is run on the purchaser.

Our current permitting laws are fully constitutional. In 1987, Mainers voted to amend article 1, section 16 of the Maine Constitution. The vote struck four words from the original provision: "for the common defense." The section now reads, "Every citizen has a right to keep and bear arms; and this right shall never be questioned." In 1990, the Supreme Judicial Court of Maine, in *State of Maine v. Edward Brown*, addressed the question: Did the amendment create an absolute right to keep and bear arms. The court concluded, "We assume that the voters intended to adopt the constitutional amendment