

HB 1311

Rep. Ben Koppelman- Testimony

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce HB 1311 to you today. The purpose of this bill is to allow an individual who has a valid dangerous weapons license to carry concealed in publicly owned and operated buildings. This would not apply to schools as they are still specifically excluded in this section. The other small change in this bill is to qualify 'athletic or sporting event' as school sponsored, which would apply to all K-12 and college events.

As many of you know, I am a big proponent of the Second Amendment. And as such, it has been a goal of mine to reduce or remove burdensome regulations in state law that limit the ability of individuals to exercise those rights.

In North Dakota we have several methods in which we can carry a dangerous weapon concealed. We can carry concealed through a provision known as 'constitutional carry', which allows residents that have lived in the state for a year to carry if they possess a valid state photo ID. An individual may also carry concealed if they possess a valid dangerous weapons license from North Dakota or a state that has reciprocity with our state.

In North Dakota, we offer two classes of dangerous weapons licenses. The primary differences in the licenses is that a class 1 license requires classroom learning, shooting proficiency, and the individual must be 21 to be eligible. The class 1 course must be repeated at each renewal whereas the class 2 may be renewed by simply filling out the paperwork and paying a fee. Both licenses have the same applicability in ND, but class 1 license holders have reciprocity with more states. Both license classes require a background check, and individuals who are not allowed to possess firearms are not eligible for a dangerous weapons license.

Currently in North Dakota, one may carry concealed in most places, with exception of schools, sporting events, churches (in some cases), bars, bingo halls, and government buildings. I believe the main reason people carry concealed is for protection, and there is no data to suggest that individuals that carry concealed in North Dakota are a threat to public safety. In fact, the restrictions in

our law are followed by the honor system, as most of the prohibited places do not have equipment that detects weapons. In other words, these laws are followed by “the good guys” and likely will not prohibit “a bad actor” who intends to do someone harm while carrying a weapon. I think it is very important for individuals to be able to carry concealed to protect themselves, as it is unreasonable to believe that the police or private security can protect us wherever we happen to be. As a rule, I believe one should be able to have the tools to protect themselves anytime they cannot reasonably be guaranteed protection by the police or private security.

In most of our neighboring states, individuals are able to carry concealed in the capitol buildings as well as many other government buildings. This has not led to any increase in violence, and in-fact may have even deterred violence since these areas are not soft target “gun-free zones”, where most active shooter events occur.

With HB 1311, I have attempted to create a reasonable path to achieve this goal in North Dakota. The changes would allow those with a valid dangerous weapons license to carry in most publicly owned and operated buildings. This group of individuals are those that are the most dedicated to carrying concealed on a regular basis as they have chosen to apply for that license even though they could carry concealed through the “constitutional carry” provision. This allows them to carry in other states as well. I believe this group is much more likely to practice firearm proficiency so that they are prepared if they ever need to use their weapon. Thus, it only seems logical that this is where we start when considering who may carry in government buildings.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I request that you give this bill a Do-Pass recommendation. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.