

Testimony of Jeff Tang before the Public Safety Committee, Room 1D LOB, February 22, 2011

In opposition to SB 1017, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE BOARD OF FIREARMS PERMIT EXAMINERS INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, AND TRANSFERRING RESPONSIBILITY FOR AMUSEMENT PARK OVERSIGHT TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION

I am Jeff Tang, the Membership Coordinator for the Connecticut Citizen's Defense League, Secretary for the Stratford Gun Collector's Association, a self-employed carpenter and small business owner, and husband of almost one year.

I oppose this bill because it eliminates the opportunity for Connecticut citizens to have a fair hearing to challenge denial of or confiscation of a Permit to Carry Pistols and Revolvers.

Connecticut's Permit to Carry Pistols and Revolvers has a "suitability" requirement, which is an arbitrary criteria which allows denial or confiscation of a Permit for reasons other than the legal requirements which would render an applicant or Permit holder legally unable to have a Permit.

The Board of Firearms Permit Examiners is the group of volunteers which considers the cases of those found "unsuitable". As such, appeal to the Board is the only recourse citizens have when officials inappropriately deem them "unsuitable" to exercise their right to keep and bear arms, as guaranteed by Article 1, Section 15 of the Connecticut State Constitution.

Consolidating the Board of Firearms Permit Examiners under the Department of Public Safety would make the Board subject to the same entity which often challenges citizen's Permits to Carry Pistols and Revolvers. This is a conflict of interest, making the appeals hearings unfair.

In a State where cities and towns often unfairly or illegally obstruct or confiscate Permits to Carry Pistols and Revolvers, the Board of Firearms Permit Examiners has never been more important. It is this Board which ensures the Rule of Law and Due Process persist despite efforts by local officials to corrupt or co-opt the Permit process. On Sunday I spoke with a young man who was not even allowed to apply for a Permit because a Trumbull detective didn't like him. These abuses must stop. As long as "suitability" is a component of the Permit process, the Board of Firearms Permit Examiners must keep it in check.

The Board consists of volunteers, with one part-time secretary. Is this really so great a price to pay for justice and fairness? Would the costs really decrease when these tasks are performed solely by State employees? The Department of Public Safety is already overburdened with work--is this really the time to add more, when there are better alternatives?