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## **CGA Government Judiciary Committee**

March 11, 2015 Public Hearing

BH 6962 AAC FIREARM SAFETY

Comments by Sue McCalley, Guns Laws, Specialist

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The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is a nonpartisan, statewide organization committed to effective public policy, the active involvement of citizens in their government and increasing the understanding of major public policy issues.

The League has supported strong measures to protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. We advocated for CT's 1994 assault weapons ban, the 2007 law mandating the reporting of a theft or loss of a firearm, and the provisions of the 2013 Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety Act.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on HB 6962, a bill that offers Connecticut the opportunity to increase gun safety standards and lower the risk of accidents due to the unsafe storage of firearms. Every year, firearms cause thousands of unintentional deaths and injuries. Between 1999 and 2010, over 8,300 people in the United States were reported as dying from unintentional shootings, including 2,383 children and young people ages 0-21.<sup>1</sup>

Americans strongly support laws requiring the safe storage of firearms. A national survey conducted in January 2013 found that 67.2% of respondents supported laws requiring gun owners to lock up any guns in the home when not in use to prevent handling by children or teenagers without adult supervision.<sup>2</sup>

Our neighbor state Massachusetts requires that all firearms be stored with a locking device in place. The state bars storing or keeping any firearm unless it is secured in a locked container or equipped with a tamper-resistant mechanical lock or other safety device. This requirement

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<sup>1</sup> Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence

<sup>2</sup> Colleen L. Barry et al., Perspective: After Newtown — Public Opinion on Gun Policy and Mental Illness, 368 *New Eng. J. Med.* 1077-1081 (March 21, 2013) at [http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1300512?query=featured\\_home&&](http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1300512?query=featured_home&&).

does not apply to any firearm “carried by or under the control of the owner or other lawfully authorized user.”

Safe storage of firearms is not only reasonable and feasible to implement, it is a step we need to take to prevent accidental and self-inflicted deaths in this state, particularly among children.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.