

Dear Committee Members,

I regret that I was unable to attend the hearing on S.B. No. 1011 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRAINING OF SECURITY PERSONNEL. However I wanted to take the time to contact the committee with some comments and concerns about this. I hope you are able to read this, and that my message does not arrive too late.

First I want to applaud the Public Safety Committee for taking up this issue. Training for private security officers has often been inadequate, and while our state has risen above many, the basic 8 hour class with no refresher material is simply not enough. That being said I think this proposed bill may be an example of working harder not smarter.

There is no questioning that our level of training needs to increase, however what is covered in that training needs to reflect the actual work being done by private security officers on a day to day basis. The mandatory inclusion of training with batons and pepper spray is only useful to those officers who will be carrying and potentially using those weapons. I wholeheartedly agree that nobody should carry those weapons without receiving proper training. However the vast majority of private security officers are generally not carrying these weapons for a variety of reasons. Most revolve around the perception of security companies and clients that they will be held liable if anything goes wrong.

I have personally worked in both armed and unarmed capacities as a security officer. I have worked for companies that issue pepper spray to officers to keep in their personal cars because the site is too dangerous to drive to and from, but forbid those officers from taking that same pepper spray out of the car because the client does not allow it on their site. More training will accomplish nothing in this scenario except to know how little the client cares about my personal safety. Our state would be better served if these weapons were treated in the same manner as firearms and required separate courses in addition to the basic security officer training for anyone who was assigned to carry them.

The proposal to increase the training from 8 hours to 24 hours is a good one, but those 24 hours could be better utilized by a dedication to more general subjects. The current 8 hour class allows for only 2 hours on first aid, yet there are no first aid certification classes that are less than 6-8 hours. The current class allows for a 1.5 hour section that covers all aspects of emergency response, patrol functions & traffic accident, scene protection, responding to emergencies, fire & bomb threat response, hazardous emergencies, terrorism, workplace violence, etc. Each of these areas would certainly take more than 1.5 hours to teach individually. Adding more subjects is seems to work against of the good idea of adding more hours.

If the idea is to increase public safety as well as officer safety there are a number of areas that could work towards these goals. Work to ensure that security officers are not denied the right to wear body armor, as is currently being suggested at a federal level. Add armed security officers into the list of exemptions in the current firearms laws that presently limit how many bullets we have to protect the various banks and other buildings that we are asked to guard.

Each year close to 100 private security officers are killed in the line of duty, yet little to no notice is given to this fact. This number is very close to the similar numbers for police officers and firefighters, yet those numbers garner great media attention. Here in CT it is currently a higher crime to assault a baseball umpire at a game than it is to assault a private security officer working to protect the public. This committee has the chance to do something good for the public and those that protect the public's property. Please take that chance, but please allow us as security officers and instructors to work smarter and not harder.

Thank you for taking the time to read these comments and concerns. Should you have any questions for me, I can be reached by e-mail at ashaw.stg@protectors.org or by phone at (203) 355-3623.

Sincerely,
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