

Testimony on Raised Senate Bill No. 235.

***An Act Concerning the construction of a Firearms Training Facility***

Public hearing – March 3, 2016

Public Safety & Security Committee

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Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to submit testimony. I write in opposition of raised Senate Bill 235, ***An Act Concerning the construction of a Firearms Training Facility*** as currently written. This bill establishes several requirements for a state agency to build a firearms training facility (purchasing 30 acres for the facility, plus another 200 or more contiguous acres for conveyance to the hosting municipality as open space, installing baffles, of taxes, grants in lieu of taxes provisions).

DESPP and DAS have proposed to purchase a relatively large tract of land to purchase and construct a firearms training facility for the State Police and are currently in the process of reviewing two sites for purchase, one in East Windsor and one in Willington for suitability as the location of this new training facility. Both municipalities (and their residents) are opposed to having this training center located within their towns.

This bill does have several good points, most notably the requirement for installing baffles to retard noise, and the provisions concerning obtaining contiguous property for conveyance to the hosting municipality for use as open space. However, I am in opposition to this bill based on the lack of provisions to prevent siting of a firearms training facility in a municipality (and its residents) that is opposed to the project being located within their town. This bill will be more supportable if it included provisions that the siting of a firearms training facility could only occur if it was approved by town referendum.

I also have concerns based on the costs of a new firearms training facility. At a time when the state budget is in crisis with billion dollar deficits forecast for the next two fiscal years, purchasing a large track of land in order to build a brand new facility, when other options are available at existing facilities, would seem to be an extravagant expenditure of funds that the state likely can't afford. As with anyone facing tightening budgets, DESPP needs to become more creative and cost-conscious in addressing their needs. Additionally, the sometimes ephemeral and often opaque nature of land conveyances make the provisions concern open space properties somewhat suspect.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

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