Election officials cannot charge poll taxes, as that infringes on a citizen’s right to vote. Municipalities cannot charge prohibitively large fees for groups to lawfully gather in public spaces as that infringes on the freedom of assembly. Thus too, states should not be able to charge prohibitively high taxes on the sale of ammunition, as that infringes on the right to keep and bear arms.

From a practical standpoint, a punitive ammunition tax has already been attempted elsewhere in the U.S. In 2016, Seattle pass a similar ammunition tax with the state goal of reducing gun violence and using the projected revenue to fund a gun violence research project at the Harborview Medical Center. As was predicted by the opponents to Seattle’s ammo tax, violent crime actually went up year-over-year in the three years since enactment in 2016. Also, as predicted by its opponents, the projected revenues from the ammo tax failed to materialize, leaving the gun violence research project under funded. And, of course, the two renaming brick and mortar firearms retailers in the city closed. Thus, the Seattle ammo tax failed in its stated mission, but succeeded in making the lawful purchase of ammunition by the law abiding citizens of Seattle much more costly, which was probably the goal all along.


In closing, I would like to draw an analogy that might bring to light the plight of those most negatively affected by HB 5040 to those people who are seemingly least affected by it, but may feel similarly offended by a prohibitive taxation on other constitutionally protected rights.

There is a constitutionally protected right to have an abortion (see Row v. Wade). If an elected official sought to tax abortion service providers in Connecticut by 35% of the cost for each abortion provided and the state used those excise tax proceeds to fund adoption agencies, would supporters of HB 5040 be okay with that? The funds would be used for a good cause, as the costs of adoptions would be go down, making adopting children more accessible to parents willing to adopt. The side effect could be that less abortions may be provided as the cost of providing abortions has gone up. Would that be an okay sacrifice to further a good cause? And if you were okay with a 35% excise tax on abortion services providers, would you be okay with a 100% excise tax, or a 1,000% excise tax? After all, the funds would be used for something good, like finding good homes for children without parents.

Isn’t taxing ammunition at an exorbitant rate to promote anti-gun violence programs the same? The right to keep and bear arms and the right to an abortion are both constitutionally protected. If the government can charge an exorbitant excise tax for one, in the name of supporting a good cause, can’t it do the same for another? The fact that the funds would be used to promote something good should really be irrelevant, if, in order to fund those good services, a constitutionally protected right is rendered inaccessible.

At what point does the tax on a constitutionally protected right become unpleasant? I would say 35% is pretty unpleasant.

Thank you for your time.

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