



TOM TIFFANY

STATE SENATOR • 12TH SENATE DISTRICT

Testimony on Senate Bill 691 Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry January 16, 2018

Thank you members of the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry for hearing Senate Bill 691 related to closures of sport shooting ranges.

Wisconsin has a long, proud, and well documented history of hunting and shooting sports. Our states rural areas are dotted with rod and gun clubs, some of them also owning shooting ranges. Members and the public use these ranges to support the clubs and practice a sport they love.

Occasionally a range may have an incident or accident that requires a law enforcement response. Unfortunately current law does not define a process for dealing with these incidents. This has led to incidents where the courts have overreacted and forced the shooting range to permanently close. Senate Bill 691 creates a process for dealing with these incidents in hopes that a fair outcome can be achieved for both parties.

- A shooting range may only be closed temporarily and only if the law enforcement office determines that the range presents a clear and immediate public safety hazard.
- A court can then further suspend operations of the range, if they find that the range constitutes said hazard.
- If closed, then the range would have 5 days to present a report from an investigation that would identify any unsafe conditions and whether that condition would warrant a permanent closure.
- Only if the hazard is identified and confirmed by the investigation and the range is subsequently unable to eliminate the hazard could that range be permanently closed.

Again, thank you members of the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 691. I would appreciate your support.

Thank you.

Tom Tiffany
Wisconsin State Senate
12th Senate District



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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

Date: January 16, 2018
To: Chairman Tom Tiffany & Members of the Senate Committee on Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry
From: Scott Jones, State Liaison
RE: Testimony on Senate Bill 691; Relating to: the standard of proof required to effect a temporary or permanent closure of a sport shooting range based on an unsafe condition.

Good morning Chairman Tiffany and Members of the Committee. My name is Scott Jones and I am here today on behalf of the tens of thousands of members of the National Rifle Association in Wisconsin to express our strong support for Senate Bill 691.

According to the Wisconsin DNR website, there are over 60 public shooting ranges available to the general public, with many more privately owned ranges scattered throughout the state. These ranges provide Wisconsin residents the opportunity to safely practice and hone their skills whether it be preparing for competition, practicing for self-defense or sighting in a rifle for an upcoming hunting season.

Over the past few years, people have filed lawsuits against sport shooting ranges for a variety of reasons including noise, nuisance, and simply being in opposition to the existence of the shooting range. In 2014, Wisconsin passed SB 527 to ensure that sport shooting ranges would be protected from zoning ordinances related to noise and nuisance complaints. Building on SB 527, SB 691 would protect sport shooting ranges from temporary or permanent closure without due process.

Under current law, if there is believed to be an unsafe condition at a sport shooting range, the entire range can be ordered to cease operation with no opportunity to remedy the situation. A safety hazard that exists on a small portion of a shooting range should not cause the closure of the entire range without further investigation.

SB 691 requires an investigation to be conducted if law enforcement or a court has reason to believe there is a clear and immediate public safety hazard. The investigation results would provide the range the opportunity to correct the hazard and resume normal operation. If a range is in full compliance with the law, it should not be subject to unreasonable hiatus or closure of operation without due process.

On behalf of NRA members in Wisconsin, I strongly urge you to support this important range protection legislation, SB 691.

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Chairman Tiffany and Members of the Senate Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation in support of Senate Bill 691. We also would like to thank Senator Tiffany and Representative Stafsholt for their leadership in introducing this bill.

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation has 205 hunting, fishing and trapping clubs as part of our membership. Over 160 of those clubs are local rod and gun clubs, the great majority of which have shooting ranges. The Federation has a very strong Shooting Range Committee which has been very active in putting on seminars for our affiliate clubs and any non-affiliate clubs in the state on safety and environmental issues related to the operation of their ranges.

This bill is a common sense bill that sets out clear and specific guidelines to law enforcement officers, courts and shooting ranges on how serious safety issues and petitions for closure will be handled. It is important for protection of shooting ranges that there be solid evidence of danger and short time-lines in processing court decisions closing ranges so that matters do not drag out contrary to the operations of the facility. Secondly the bill assures a quick and certain pathway for a shooting range to correct any serious problem and reopen their facility.

Please support Senate Bill 691.

**Submitted by Ralph Fritsch representing the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
January 16, 2018**

January 16, 2018

Sporting Heritage, Mining and Forestry

Relating to: Senate Bill 691

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Range protection is important for every citizen of the State.

SB 691 is a much needed addition to Wisconsin's current range protection. This bill will help ensure that ranges cannot be harassed out of existence by unfriendly local governments or neighbors. It is extremely important that Wisconsin citizens have an adequate number of places to exercise their 2nd Amendment rights. As a Nationally Certified Range Technician and Training Counselor, I strongly support legislation that protects our ranges. The citizens of our State need an appropriate, convenient place to practice the safe use of firearms.

Ranges are an important asset to their local community; protecting them is critical to every citizen in the State. Having a safe, convenient, local facility is a big part of keeping firearm accidents minimal. Everyone benefits when local ranges allow citizens to have a safe place to practice, learn or teach firearm safety.

Living near a range has an incredible safety record based on the rare instance of accidents. Local ranges help continue to improve safety, not only at ranges, but when firearms are used hunting, practicing, or in self-defense.

If going to the range is not convenient, most will practice less or utilize places not designed for the amount of rounds that are fired. Very few private individuals have property that can be safely used to discharge firearms. Ranges are designed to safely allow large amounts of rounds to be fired on a small amount of land. Ranges are also a place where shooters teach and learn firearm safety, both formally in classes, and informally by the operating procedures, observation of others, and activities at the range.

As a training counselor, I emphasize that repetition is the key to doing things correctly. Ranges offer continual reminders of the proper use of firearms. Just by being at a range, following the standard operating procedures, helps reinforce safety. Ranges also host courses from basic instruction through advanced specialized instruction and hunter safety courses. Matches and other activities use range safety rules, with some activities having additional requirements. Hunters that can practice safe handling and marksmanship on a regular basis at a local range will have a much more enjoyable, safe hunt.

Most of Wisconsin's ranges are operated by gun clubs and ran by volunteers. They have limited resources to fight harassment in the courts. The common sense protections in this bill will help ensure that these clubs can continue to be an asset to their communities.

Setting impracticable, unachievable safety standards for ranges is just one way for those that do not respect the rights of others to bully a range out of existence. Senate Bill 691 is a common sense addition to our current range protection. It is important to every citizen of Wisconsin that there are convenient safe places to learn, teach, practice, enjoy and compete for those that use firearms.

I encourage you to pass this bill, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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