

HCS HBs 359 & 634 -- FIREARMS IN CHURCHES

SPONSOR: Baker

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 9 to 7. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Legislative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 2 with 1 voting Present.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 359.

This bill allows the concealed carrying of firearms in churches and other places of worship with a concealed carry permit.

The bill also changes the minimum age to receive a concealed carry permit from 19 years of age or 18 years of age and a member of the United States Armed Forces to 18 years of age.

This bill is similar to HB 2186 (2020).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the bill allows individuals to maintain their Second Amendment rights while in places of worship. Parishioners will also have a better chance to prevent acts of violence committed at churches.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Baker; Arnie Dienoff; and Susan Myers.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the bill compels speech from places of worship by necessitating a sign if firearms are not permitted. This posting also makes churches more vulnerable to attack as attackers would know immediately that parishioners would not have firearms to defend themselves. The current statutory scheme, however, provides that church leaders can control firearms in churches.

Testifying against the bill were Denis Rigdon; Gail Wechsler; Janice Mericle; Karen Rogers; Marc Becker; Thomas Hastings; Brian Barnhart; Brian Kaylor; Claudia G Moran; Daniel S Bogard; Elizabeth Moore; Elizabeth Scriven, Rockwell House Episcopal Campus Ministry In St. Louis; James Croft, Ethical Society of St. Louis; Jean C Knapp; Joy Ellen Last; Julie Farrar; Laurie Justiss; Marlene O'Brien; Mary Gross; Mary V Hastings, MD; Nancy Ames; Paul A. Metzler; Rev Jan Oneil; Rev. Erika Gravely; Reverend Mary M

Haggerty; Reverend Edwin Zumwinkel III, Webster Groves Presbyterian Church; Robert E. Lewis; Saundra A. Lowes; Tara Reuter Johnson; Rev. Mike Angell, The Episcopal Church of The Holy Communion; Tim D Knapp; William Haggerty; Andrew Carpentier; Cheyanne Lovellette; Eliana Haig; Hannah Shanks; Poli Rijos; Rev. Lauren Bennett; Sean Lovellette; and the Missouri Catholic Conference.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.