

Dear committee members:

I am writing to you to urge you to oppose HF3357. This bill accomplishes nothing to support safety on the Capitol grounds, and is aimed solely at law abiding, peaceable Minnesotans who are authorized by the state to carry firearms.

It is currently a felony to unlawfully carry a firearm on the Capitol Complex under 609.66. Under provisions of that statute, people with a Minnesota carry permit (who are otherwise authorized to carry a firearm throughout most of their daily activities) are exempted and allowed to exercise their Second Amendment rights while exercising their First Amendment rights and interacting with their government. HF 3357 does nothing to increase security around the Capitol other than make what is currently lawful behavior (carry of firearms by law-abiding Minnesotans) unlawful. This bill does nothing to deter unlawful carry as this is already unlawful.

It is important to acknowledge a few considerations. First, those with a Minnesota carry permit are some of the most law abiding citizens in the state. They are vetted by law enforcement when issued their permits, and yearly thereafter, as well as every time they purchase a firearm. It has been shown time and time again that those with carry permits commit crime at a lower rate than the rest of the population, and even at a lower rate than police. Carry permit holders ARE NOT the problem, or cause, of violent crime nationwide, and specifically in Minnesota.

Furthermore, the misuse of firearms in state capitols simply does not happen. The majority of states allow for lawful carry on Capitol grounds in some manner, and there has never been an incident by a lawful carrier while visiting a state capitol. Zero. Has never happened. In fact, there has been very little violence on Capitol grounds throughout our country in general. The few incidents of negligent discharges or misplaced firearms that have happened in state capitols have been related to legislators or police officers, both of which are groups that are often exempted from prohibitions anyways.

While I appreciate your concern for your personal safety while serving in the legislature, this bill targets a group of people who are simply not a problem or a threat. And while you are concerned for your safety, I would ask about the safety and security of those visiting the Capitol, who choose to carry a firearm for personal protection. St. Paul is not the safest city in the state, and the area around the Capitol is not the safest area. So this bill, which accomplishes nothing for your safety, requires those visiting to put aside their personal security to visit.

At the end of the day, this bill would require law-abiding Minnesotans to choose between rights. Put aside their Second Amendment rights to exercise their First Amendment right to petition their government or avoid their government and curtail their First Amendment right to maintain their Second Amendment rights.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

David Wetzel, M.D.

Rochester, MN
dwetzel56@gmail.com