



Senator Cynthia Stone Creem  
State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 312-A  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Michael S. Day  
State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 136  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Joan Lovely  
State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 413-D  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Carlos Gonzalez  
State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 167  
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Bruce Tarr  
State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 308  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Joseph McKenna  
State House  
24 Beacon Street  
Room 167  
Boston, MA 02133

March 1, 2024

Dear Chair Creem, Chair Day, and members of the conference committee:

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) applauds your commitment to gun violence prevention with the passage H.4139, *An Act modernizing firearm laws* in October and S.2572, *An Act to sensibly address firearm violence through effective reform*, the SAFER Act, in February. We believe these necessary reforms will save lives on day one of implementation. According to the Gun Violence Archive, 121 Massachusetts residents have been killed and 287 injured by firearms since the legislative session began on January 1, 2023 through today.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we urge swift action to ensure the legislation reaches Governor Healey's desk as quickly as possible.

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS), with Leagues in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, believes that all stages of the democratic process, from protests before elections to casting one's ballot and counting votes, should be free from threats of violence and intimidation, as outlined in an [amicus brief](#) in support of the New York state concealed carry law overturned by the US Supreme Court decision, *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*, 2022. The presence of firearms in any of these spaces is an inherent threat to public safety, especially considering our country's history of violent voter suppression against

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/>

communities of color. Voters must be assured that when they cast their ballot, they can do so safely without the threat of gun violence. “Allowing private citizens to carry guns inside polling places and at other election-related events poses a threat to the electoral process. Voter intimidation must not be tolerated,” according to Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, former LWVUS president. “Voters have a right to safe access to their polling place.” Without such restrictions, the threat of intimidation at polling places and as votes are counted could imperil the electoral process.

The US Supreme Court determined polling places are sensitive spaces in the decisions *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*, 2022 and *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008, and therefore firearms may be prohibited. As Justice Scalia wrote in *Heller*, “The Court’s opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on...laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings”.<sup>2</sup> Justice Clarence Thomas wrote the majority opinion in *Bruen* stating, “Although the historical record yields relatively few 18th- and 19th-century “sensitive places” where weapons were altogether prohibited—e.g., legislative assemblies, **polling places**, and courthouses—we are also aware of no disputes regarding the lawfulness of such prohibitions.”<sup>3</sup>

For these reasons, LWVMA respectfully requests the following provisions be included in the final firearms bill conference report:

- 1) Adoption of the House provision banning firearms from all polling locations. According to data provided to us by the Secretary of the Commonwealth Elections Division dated February 6, 2024, there are 2,387 active polling stations across the Commonwealth; 1,949 are located within schools and municipal buildings. Firearms are currently prohibited in schools and municipal buildings. However, 438 polling stations, or 18.3%, are houses of worship, housing for the elderly, social clubs, grocery stores, and more. Citizens voting in these 438 locations deserve the same safety protections afforded in the other 1,949. We know houses of worship are specific targets of violence from the synagogues that faced hoax bomb threats from Tisbury to Northampton on December 16, 2023.<sup>4</sup>
- 2) Eliminate the Senate provision offering municipalities the option to allow licensed gun owners to carry firearms in municipal government buildings. The Commonwealth is obligated to protect residents in all 351 cities and towns from gun violence or the threat of gun violence. Municipalities should not have the choice to opt out given the SCOTUS decisions mentioned above.

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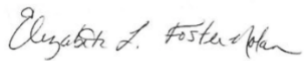
<sup>2</sup> District of Columbia v. Heller. 554 U. S. 570. 2008. <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/usrep/usrep554/usrep554570/usrep554570.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen. 597 U. S. \_\_\_\_ 2022. [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-843\\_7j80.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/20-843_7j80.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Hauser, Brooke and Cotter, Sean. “Police investigate multiple bomb threats to synagogues across the state”, *The Boston Globe*. December 17, 2023. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/12/17/metro/police-investigate-multiple-bomb-threats-synagogues-across-state/>

LWVMA is a grassroots, nonpartisan political advocacy organization. Our mission is to empower voters and strengthen democracy. With 43 local Leagues and more than 3,000 members across 110 municipalities, LWVMA educates voters to effect change. We urge you to ensure the health and safety of all Massachusetts residents not only on election day but every day by prohibiting guns at polling locations and eliminating the option for municipalities to allow guns in government buildings within the final conference committee report.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Foster Nolan  
Board Co-President



Marie Gauthier  
Board Co-President



Jennifer Muroff  
Chair, Legislative Action  
Committee