



NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION
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MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

DATE: April 7, 2015

TO: Honorable Members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee

FROM: John Hohenwarter, Maine State Liaison

RE: Legislative Document 942

On behalf of the National Rifle Association of America, I would like to communicate our support for Legislative Document 942. Sponsored by Senator Garrett Mason (R-22), LD 942 would add Maine to the growing number of states that allow sportsmen to use legally-possessed sound suppressors while hunting. The legislation would also remove personal bias from the process to obtain suppressors and other National Firearms Act (NFA) items by requiring that a chief law enforcement officer (CLEO) sign an application for the acquisition or transfer of any item regulated under NFA within a timely fashion, so long as the applicant is not legally prohibited from receiving it. Finally, the measure provides a right to appeal a denial to obtain such an item.

Sound suppressors attached to firearms (less accurately called "silencers" in federal law) are an additional tool available to help protect the shooter's hearing, reduce noise complaints by surrounding residents, as well as increase accuracy and safety. While suppressors do not eliminate the sound of a firearm, they do reduce the muzzle report of a firearm much in the same way a muffler reduces exhaust noise from a car or truck. Currently, there are thirty-nine states which allow the private ownership of suppressors and more than half of the states across the country allow for the use of suppressors while hunting.

Suppressors, which are currently legal to possess in Maine, have a rigorous, expensive and time consuming process for being acquired. In order to secure a suppressor, a purchaser must submit the appropriate paperwork to the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, where long wait times for approval are unfortunately common (four to six months). Also, purchasers must undergo a background check by the FBI, find a licensed dealer authorized to conduct the transaction and pay a one-time \$200 tax for each device.

Additionally, this bill would impose reasonable deadlines and ensure that individuals who are lawfully seeking to transfer an NFA item, including short barreled rifles and short barreled

shotguns, are able to do so in an expeditious manner. Some CLEOs simply refuse to sign such forms, and nothing in current law prohibits this, even if the applicant's receipt of the NFA item would not be contrary to law and the CLEO has no information that the applicant intends to use the NFA item for an unlawful purpose.

LD 942 would prevent an arbitrary personal bias from determining Maine firearm policy and ensure that qualified, law-abiding Mainers will not be denied their ability to legally own NFA items. The reforms in LD 942 benefit law-abiding Second Amendment supporters by ensuring that the process to obtain NFA items already legal in Maine remains consistent, fact-based and objective.

It is for these reasons that Maine gun owners, sportsmen, and NRA members encourage you to support this important piece of legislation. As always, I am available at (703) 267-1208 should you wish to discuss the NRA's position on this matter.