

Legislative Affairs Report

Kelly Myers, Co-Director, Legislative Affairs

First off, I'd like to thank everyone for the opportunity to take this role. With that said, I can't replace Bill Dowden, I can only hope to fill (half) of the position.

The path that led me here started in 2017. I found myself in a hearing of the Indiana House of Representatives Public Policy Committee. Although it wasn't coming up for a committee vote, this was the first time Constitutional (permitless) Carry of handguns was brought up for discussion in a hearing. This is also when the public can come in and testify.

In a very short time I realized a few things: the 2nd Amendment advocates aren't filling near as many seats as the "antis" (my generic term for people who oppose gun rights.) I also realized that I needed a hobby, and I could testify in support of 2nd Amendment issues.

Constitutional Carry of handguns found its way to a Summer Study that year. That would be the first time I would testify at the Statehouse and for Constitutional Carry. It would not be the last.

In early 2018 and purely by chance, I met David Conte (NRA-ILA Regional Grassroots Campaign Field Coordinator) at the Indy 1500 Gun and Blade Show at the State Fairgrounds. David was there with the effort to get Senator Mike Braun elected. He signed me up to be an NRA-ILA volunteer right after I said, "I want (then US Senator) Joe Donnelly to be unemployed."

This led to working at the NRA/NRA-ILA/ISRPA booth at the Indy 1500s as well as at the Deer, Turkey and Waterfowl Expo. That is where I spent a great deal of time with Dan Pavloff (former ISRPA Vice President/Special Projects.) Dan is a great friend and a great supporter of our 2nd Amendment Rights.

I consider myself blessed since I live close to the Indiana Statehouse, and work even closer to the Statehouse. Over the years I was able to testify in support of: Church Carry (when there is a school on the property,) civil immunity for lawful use of deadly force, strengthening protections under the Laird Law (red flag law,) handgun training for teachers, limiting the release of handgun license information/specifying when federal agencies can receive the information, and Constitutional Carry of Handguns (a total of six times.)

There are A LOT of bills introduced every legislative session (which begins in January and runs until mid-March or early April depending on the biennial budget.) Good news: I took on the role of reviewing the Senate and House Bills at the Indiana General Assembly for an online gun owner's community a few years ago. Better news: there are others at the ISRPA doing the same thing. Getting the word out on pending legislation is a major part of ISRPA Government Affairs.

Every year there will be three or four pro-gun owner bills in the Indiana General Assembly (out of the 600+ bills introduced every year.) Letters/emails/phone calls to not only your State Senator/Representative, but to Committee Chairs (these individuals make the call on what gets a hearing, and what never makes it out of committee) and members of the specific committee (when the bill has a hearing, these are the folks who determine if it gets a vote on the Senate or House floor.) This is quite easy and done from the Indiana General Assembly website. Always remember: copy/paste is your friend.

Bills to look for in 2024: Financial companies who discriminate against gun owners and anyone in a business related to firearms? The State of Indiana will not do business with these companies. We had a good start on this in 2023, it's time to take it further. Also: Fixing the Nantz v State (2001) Circuit Court decision that made pointing a firearm only legal if it is a "reasonable force includes deadly force" situation. This bill has passed the Senate three times, but has never received a hearing in the House.

There are also a number of anti-gun bills introduced every year. With the Republican super-majority in both the House and Senate these bills rarely if ever get a hearing in committee (thus never receive a floor vote) but it is important to know what could happen to our gun rights if we don't keep up the fight.

It is vitally important that our elected officials (at Federal and State level) know that gun owners are out here, we pay attention, and we vote. The antis never give up, neither can we.