From:	Ann Gifford
To:	House State Affairs; Rep. Laddie Shaw; Rep. Stanley Wright; Rep. Ben Carpenter; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Jamie Allard; Rep. Jennie Armstrong; Rep. Andi Story
Subject:	Oppose HB 61
Date:	Sunday, April 9, 2023 2:02:02 PM

Dear Chair Shaw and committee members,

I am a retired attorney and long-time resident of Juneau AK. I'm opposed to HB 61 because it would tie the hands of our governor and local officials when they most need flexibility to respond to catastrophes. When there is an earthquake, flood or fire governments often need to restrict access to specific areas or impose curfews to protect safety and prevent theft. First responders need to set up shelters, field hospitals and soup kitchens. Limiting the carrying or use of firearms in those times and places can be an important tool to protect public safety and maintain order. I think if we were to prohibit our leaders from using that tool we would come to regret it later.

Sometimes it's not safe for people to drive their cars or trucks during an emergency. Sometimes it's not safe for them to carry their guns. We need to make sure our leaders have the ability to respond quickly and impose reasonable rules during natural disasters and other emergencies to keep everyone safe.

I'm also concerned about giving favored status to commercial enterprises like gun shops and shooting ranges. I understand that this bill was prompted by complaints that these businesses were not considered “essential” and were subject to temporary closure at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The types of services that are considered essential can vary depending on the nature of an emergency and even on the nature of a particular pandemic. I can’t fault our leaders for closing most shops and services to try to contain the spread of Covid 19, especially in the early days when we didn't know exactly how it was transmitted. Car and boat dealers didn’t make the list of essential businesses, nor did health clubs. Why should a gun shop get favored status over a car or boat dealer? Why should a shooting range get preference over a health club? Please don't make decisions driven by economic protectionism.

Finally, I object to giving “a membership organization…dedicated…to the protection of the rights of persons who possess or use firearms…” special status as a “person” entitled to sue under this proposed law and to collect treble punitive damages if they’re successful. This is a particularly offensive form of economic protectionism for the NRA and similar gun rights organizations. It would encourage needless litigation and the wasteful use of state funds to defend litigation where no actual person has been harmed and is motivated to sue.

HB 61 would do nothing to promote the public interest. Please do not approve this bill.

Thank you for your service to our State. Sincerely, Ann Gifford