

# Senate Judiciary Committee

*Brendan Bunnell 271-4063*

**HB 609-FN**, relative to the general court's authority over the sale, purchase, ownership, use, possession, transportation, licensing, permitting, taxation, and other matter pertaining to firearms, stun guns, tasers, pepper spray devices, knives and other self-defense tools.

**Hearing Date:** March 10, 2026

**Time Opened:** 1:35 p.m.

**Time Closed:** 1:52 p.m.

**Members of the Committee Present:** Senators Gannon, Abbas, Altschiller and Reardon

**Members of the Committee Absent:** Senator Carson

**Bill Analysis:** This bill provides that the general court has authority and jurisdiction over the regulation of firearms, stun guns, Tasers, pepper spray devices, knives and other self-defense tools.

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**Sponsors:**

Rep. Farrington

Rep. Aures

Rep. DeRoy

Rep. DeVito

Rep. Drew

Rep. Layon

Rep. McFarlane

Rep. Wood

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**Who supports the bill:** Representative Mike Belcher, Representative Donald McFarlane, Representative Daniel Popovici-Muller, Representative Terry Roy, JR Hoell, Joseph LoPorto, Cory Stone, Daniel Richardson, Simon Berrio, Curtis Howland, Timothy Finney, Pamela Harders, Patricia Rotondo, Paul Clauvin, Chris Stone, Teresa Brooks, Kimberly Morin, Bill Alleman and Jay Simkin.

**Who opposes the bill:** 54 people signed in opposition, for a complete list of those who signed please email [brendan.bunnell@gc.nh.gov](mailto:brendan.bunnell@gc.nh.gov).

**Who is neutral on the bill:** None.

**Summary of the testimony presented:**

**Representative Donald McFarlane** spoke in support of the bill. He explained that it would return to the legislature the ability to exert authority over the sale of self-defense tools. He stated that the bill was in response by attempts by some agencies to exert authority over these items themselves.

- Stated that some items, like corrosives or poisons, ought to be subject to special rules, but not those specified in the bill. He explained that his committee has not heard testimony on these edge cases which would not be covered by the statute.
- Senator Gannon asked what is meant by “self defense tools.”
  - Representative McFarlane stated that there are many in the House that would like to see the definition broadened, and said that regardless it should be up to the legislature to make the rules around these items and not the agencies.
- Senator Altschiller asked what the Representative had meant by “rules that don’t exist.”
  - Representative McFarlane stated that the rules did exist, but that they ought to be subject to the authority of the General Court.
- Senator Altschiller asked if there was a definition of self-defense tools.
  - Representative McFarlane responded that he was uncertain, but that in the absence of such a definition he felt that the intention was made very clear in the bill.
  - Representative McFarlane stated that a private snow Snow Plow Operator could carry self-defense items in their vehicle for their own safety against animals like bears, but that a Snow Plow Operator working for the Department of Transportation would be forbidden from doing so. He stated that this ought to be up to the individual and not the department’s rules.
- Senator Altschiller asked about line 7 and line 13, and stated that the language of “or other self-defense tools” leaves the bill intentionally vague.
  - Representative McFarlane stated that he was not the prime sponsor but that he felt that this granted full protection for whatever self-defense tools an individual might possess.

**Representative Terry Roy** spoke in support of the bill. He explained that it was meant to reemphasize the preeminence of the General Court when determining the law around self-defense tools.

- Explained that it would not protect items like brass knuckles, which are already illegal, but instead state that a local agency cannot define that.
- Senator Abbas asked about the use of “jurisdiction” on line 4, and whether that might carry some unintended consequences. He questioned whether this would prevent agencies from carrying out their duties like with permitting requirements.

- Representative Roy stated that these permitting requirements originated within the state and that the state could delegate to these agencies.

**The Honorable JR Hoell**, a representative of the New Hampshire Firearms Coalition, spoke to the history of the bill. He explained that it went back to 2003 when this was first established. It was updated in 2011 when knives were added to the definition. He stated that the current bill sought to update this and that the language is intentionally left broad to respond to future developments and items that may be used for self-defense.

**Joseph LoPorto**, a representative for the National Rifle Association, spoke in support of the bill. He stated that the language in the bill works to make it clear that the General Court is assuming responsibility for protecting the right to bare arms and to occupy the entire field of regulation. He stated that this bill would give residents in New Hampshire the right to litigate over the issue when an agency oversteps.

- Explained that the broad definition of self-defense tools was in line with the intentions of the Second Amendment of the US Constitution.
- Senator Abbas asked if it would be acceptable towards the use of the word “jurisdiction” to add “over the regulation of the sale purchase” afterwards.
- Mr. LoPorto answered that it would be, and said that other states’ laws might state as to the intention of the state to regulate firearms.