

Senate Judiciary Committee

Pete Mulvey 271-4063

HB 207-FN, relative to repealing the prohibition on the possession or sale of blackjacks, slung shots, and metallic knuckles except by or to minors.

Hearing Date: April 10, 2025

Time Opened: 1:10 p.m.

Time Closed: 1:25 p.m.

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

Members of the Committee Absent : Senators Abbas and McConkey

Bill Analysis: This bill amends the prohibition against carrying or selling a blackjack, slung shot, or metallic knuckles to prohibit sale to or possession of the said items by those under 18 years of age.

Sponsors:

Rep. Spillane

Rep. Aures

Rep. Cole

Rep. Edwards

Rep. Osborne

Rep. Roy

Rep. Ulery

Rep. D. Mannion

Rep. Ammon

Sen. Murphy

Sen. Pearl

Who supports the bill: 13 individuals signed in support of HB 207-FN. Contact peter.mulvey@gc.nh.gov for further details.

Who opposes the bill: 49 individuals signed in opposition to HB 207-FN. Contact peter.mulvey@gc.nh.gov for further details.

Who is neutral on the bill: N/A

Summary of testimony:

Representative James Spillane

Rockingham – District 2

- Rep. Spillane introduced HB 207-FN, which repealed the prohibition on blackjacks, slung shots, and metallic knuckles for adults over the age of 18.
- Most of the weapons subject to the prohibition in question are antique in nature.
- Certain licensees, namely hunters and fishers, may use these devices.
- Rep. Spillane believed the language governing blackjacks, slung shots, and metallic knuckles should mirror the statutes governing knives and blades.
- Sen. Gannon asked Rep. Spillane to describe a blackjack and slung shot.

- Rep. Spillane said that fisherman carried blackjacks. A blackjack is a leather strap with a lead shot and is used to club dangerous fish should they board a vessel.
- A slungshot is used by fisherman and sailors to throw line.
- Blackjacks and slung shots were banned because sailors carried them as weapons
- Rep. Spillane said that the TSA did not confiscate his slung shot.
- A version of a blackjack can be purchased legally as a device intended to hold a book open.
- Brass knuckles are sometimes sold as paperweights.
- Rep. Spillane found the prohibition nebulous given the many exclusions and persistent retailing of the devices themselves.
- Sen. Altschiller asked Rep. Spillane if he were aware that the devices he described, namely metallic knuckles, can be purchased from numerous online retailers, new, while also marketed for their intended purpose.
 - Rep. Spillane was aware and clarified that the devices sold as paperweights were still weapons in his view, despite their product categorization.
 - Rep. Spillane maintained that retail demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the ban, given that despite the prohibition, the products may be purchased conveniently.
 - It is far more likely that someone is carrying a knife, taser, pepper spray or firearm than a blackjack, slung shot, or metallic knuckles.
 - Rep. Spillane added that as self defense weapons, slung shots and blackjacks were easier to use and had less potential collateral compared to firearms.
- Sen. Altschiller stated that RSA 159:17 enabled possession of brass knuckles, but only if actively engaged in licensed fishing or hunting activities.
 - Rep. Spillane stated that the definition of engaged as it related to fishing or hunting was broad, and encompassed requisite or peripheral activities, such as shopping for supplies or traveling between locations.
- Sen. Altschiller disagreed and reiterated the language of the statute which stated that eligible individuals must be engaged in their respective activities.
 - Rep. Spillane elaborated upon the many actions that fishers and hunters took which were considered being engaged in hunting or fishing.

Jeffrey Kelman

Bedford resident

- Mr. Kelman identified himself as a Jewish man active in his local temple.
- Mr. Kelman expressed concern over increasing antisemitism.
- HB 207 may seem unnecessary. Mr. Kelman emphasized that there is broad access to other weapons.
- It is unlikely that many will go out and purchase these weapons if made legal.
- On the margins, some individuals will buy such devices, and therefore choose to not buy guns, or other more lethal weapons.
- The devices subject to HB 207 were less lethal than knives, as well.
- Mr. Kelman stated that he was inclined to support HB 207.
- Despite the prohibition, the devices in question are easily accessible online. Nonetheless, they are not frequently purchased or used.
- Overall, HB 207 was not a major change, but a marginal improvement.

PM
Date Hearing Report completed: April 14, 2025