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Testimony in support of LD 79, "An Act To Protect Shooting Ranges"

Presented by Representative William Pluecker House District 95. Presented to the Inland Fisheries & Wildlife Committee, Wednesday, February 6, 2019.

I received a letter from a man in Newfield, ME who is opposed to this bill. In it, he stated that he had been in conflict with a local gun club since he had bought his land in January of 2013. This was a club that had been in operation, according to his letter, since 1972.

"I was met with continued complete disregard for my safety by the Club and with official resistance and inaction from every level of authority along the way. I got nowhere until I built my cabin in fall of '17 and even then it took many complaints, emails and 6 months to finally close the range in September of '18."

He bought and moved onto his property with the knowledge of the club, but perhaps, without the realization of the reality of it. However, just as he has certain property rights as an owner, the club also has certain property rights and one of those rights is to shoot guns on their property.

It appears clear in the above quote that he used the current law as a tool for shutting down the gun club, thereby infringing on the club's rights to use their property as they see fit. He found that the club was not responsive to his desires that they continued in their operation, and he, therefore, built a small cabin near the property line in order to force the closing of the club.

Clearly the law is set up to protect the public from the potential hazard of living near a gun range. Equally clear, though, is that the current law is being used to shutter ranges, and is a tool being abused by abutting property owners to infringe upon the rights of gun ranges to operate.

I am a farmer. As a farm, we are permitted to continue farming even if development occurs near our farm and our new neighbors find our normal farming

operation a nuisance. The fact is that farms sometimes smell and are sometimes noisy, but we were there first. New neighbors do not have the right to complain about us or force us to change our practices because they are made uncomfortable with the way we have been doing business since before they moved in.

We have a heritage of hunting and shooting guns in our state. Gun ranges are part of that heritage. They are places to learn gun safety, blow off some steam, and become reacquainted with your gun before hunting season. Gun ranges should not be threatened by development, especially development that is targeted to closing the range.

It is time to make our laws consistent. Let's get rid of the ambiguity. When a pre-existing gun range bothers a new abutter, the neighbor needs to know who their neighbors are before they commit to the purchase, and the range has a right to continue serving their community. Thank you for your consideration.