

Stephen Johnston

1003 Tasker Ln.
Arnold MD 21012
SteveJohnston93@gmail.com

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HB 937 and HB 387
Unfavorable

I am a lifelong Maryland resident who enjoys shooting sports, hunting, fishing, and other outdoor pursuits. I write in opposition to both HB 937 and HB 387, two bills aimed squarely at making firearms ownership more expensive for the average Maryland resident by imposing either an 11% excise tax or a 12% sales tax on a constitutionally protected right.

The taxes will cause people to shop out of state

As a resident of central Maryland I'm well aware that I can be in any neighboring state within about 45 minutes, shorter than some residents commute to work. Since no other state surrounding Maryland has such an extreme tax rate on firearms, ammunition, or accessories, buyers would simply buy in person out of state. This is made especially true since many long guns, shotguns, optics, etc. can cost many thousands of dollars, leading to hundreds of dollars in savings by simply driving to a neighboring state like Virginia, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, or Delaware.

Dealers will simply move out of state

For similar issues as above, dealers will simply move their operations out of state, we saw this in 2013 with the passage of the Firearms Safety Act of 2013 when a major Maryland firearms and accessories manufacturer, Beretta, moved operations out of Prince George's County and into Tennessee. Taking jobs, tax revenue, and even some employees with it. There is nothing stopping a firearms dealer from setting up shop just across from the Maryland border to sell long guns, shotguns, optics, ammunition, and accessories. All while escaping Maryland's taxes and fees imposed by these bills.

Taxing body armor, the most passive form of self defense

HB 937 goes so far as to double the sales tax on body armor, the most passive form of self defense. Something that in no way contributes to violence in any form. Body armor is so passive in the goal of self defense that there are even bulletproof inserts for backpacks for children, or soft armor

that hides under your clothes for those in high risk jobs, for instance. Body armor also doesn't transform you into a bulletproof superman, it simply spreads the force of a bullet across a wide area and prevents penetration. The wearer will still suffer broken ribs, have the wind knocked out of them, and have serious blunt force injury. It simply raises the likelihood that the recipient of the shot survives.

I feel this is a step backwards for Maryland residents, trying to make it more expensive and more out of reach to protect yourself in the most passive way possible with lifesaving equipment that has no capacity to harm others. Be it a gas station cashier who wants to protect themselves with soft armor under their clothes, a child with a bulletproof backpack insert, or a security guard trying to do their job duties. This bill serves only to put up more financial walls and more cost to lifesaving equipment.

These taxes will unfairly impact lower income Maryland residents

These taxes impose either an 11% excise tax or a 12% sales tax, while this may not bother a wealthier resident, they could mean the difference between a person living in a lower income household having the ability to protect themselves or not. For people with limited funds, it would be hard to balance the cost of a firearm, ammunition, training, a quick access safe, and associated fees. These bills seek only to widen that financial hurdle that residents must face when trying to protect their hearth and home.

For the reasons above, I urge an unfavorable report on these bills.

Sincerely yours,



Stephen Johnston
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