

NEWS RELEASE
Alabama Sheriffs Association

February 13, 2013
For Immediate Release

The Sheriffs of Alabama stand firmly in support of the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights. We support the Constitution of the State of Alabama. We also stand united in our support of the 2nd Amendment. The founding fathers of our nation established the rule of law and we do not support those that oppose federal law enforcement officers performing their lawful duties.

We have studied proposed legislation (particularly Alabama Senate Bill 129 and Alabama House Bill 55) regarding firearm laws in our state. We want the citizens of our state to know that these are bad bills and we strongly oppose them for a number of reasons. These bills will take away the authority of your Sheriff to perform his/her duty to investigate those applying for concealed weapons permits. The vast majority of our citizens, who apply for permits, are issued one within a very short time.

We recognize and declare that the great majority of people who suffer from mental illnesses are not violent and not a threat to others. Because of how Alabama laws are written, there are large loopholes in our law that allow those that are mentally ill and violent to lawfully purchase a firearms today. These two proposed bills would make those loopholes even bigger. Your Sheriff works every day to keep Alabama citizens safe and protect the rights of county residents.

We believe that local officials are in the right position to make the best decisions about pistol permits and we need discretion - and the flexibility to use our discretion - to handle those duties.

Under current law, the only violent mentally ill persons reported to NCIC are those who used a firearm; those who used a knife, vehicle, arson, or other means are not being reported to the NCIC system and can lawfully purchase/own a firearm in Alabama.

Recently in Baldwin County, AL, two deputies were shot - one was killed - by a violent mentally ill person who could have lawfully purchased a firearm and under this proposed law would have been entitled to a pistol permit.

Recent events in Dale County highlight the weaknesses in Alabama about mentally ill persons with firearms.

The proposed legislation:

- **will put into law unreasonable penalties for public officials attempting to perform their duties**
- **will take away rights of property owners to control their private property or places of business**
- **will take away the authority of local government to protect public buildings such as schools, courthouses, and other similar facilities**
- **will allow radical organizations to come armed to public demonstrations**
- **will make it easier for criminals to obtain concealed pistol permits**
- **will take away control from organizations such as churches over firearms being brought into their buildings and properties**

For example, in Calhoun County last month, a man telephoned a threat about his ex-wife and went to her residence with 3 firearms in his vehicle. He was a concealed weapon permit holder and if this bill became law, we could not suspend that man's permit.

Every day, Alabama law enforcement deals with these types of incidents and we use our lawful discretion to protect our citizens. Your Sheriff is the chief law enforcement officer of their county and we understand the laws of the State of Alabama.