

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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Senator Helming: Gun Raffle Ban Misses Mark, Hurts Local Organizations



Senator Helming shooting clay targets at the MacDougall Sportsmen Club

GENEVA – Many local organizations, including volunteer fire departments, veterans groups, sportsmen’s clubs, and fraternal orders such as Elks Clubs and Mason Lodges, hold raffles each year. The funds they raise are used to support a variety of worthy charitable causes across our region. Legislation has been put forward in the State Assembly that would prohibit non-profit organizations from holding gun raffle fundraisers. The legislation was introduced by Assemblywoman Jo Anne Simon, a Brooklyn Democrat, and is currently in the Assembly Racing and Wagering Committee. There currently is no same-as bill before the Senate.

“This sort of legislation is something that should concern everyone. This bill would deny many organizations an important tool they use to raise funds to support scholarships and other community activities. In fact, many local fire departments rely on this funding to purchase the equipment needed to keep their members safe and to protect our community, helping to reduce the burden on taxpayers. The legislation has little to do with public safety and everything to do with politics. The bill ignores the fact that those who win one of these raffles must undergo a background check before they can pick up their prize. People across New York enjoy attending these events and supporting local service organizations. We need to protect their right to do so,

and I urge members of the public to share their thoughts with the sponsor of this legislation,” said Senator Pam Helming.

West Aurelius Fire Department Captain Kevin Foster said, “Especially since the Governor strapped municipalities with the 2 percent property tax cap, we are forced more than ever to conduct fundraisers to make up any shortfalls in our budget needs. We use all funds raised to supplement equipment and other needs of the Fire Department. Our Fire Department has had several gun raffles over the years along with chicken barbeques and other creative ways to raise funds. Perhaps the governor could find a way to legislate our cost of providing fire protection – insurance, firefighting equipment, apparatus, cancer coverage, and other unfunded mandates – to our residents at 2 percent. Then our need to fundraise could be lessened. However, until that happens, we will continue to do fundraisers to supplement our budget.”

Magee Fire Department Chief Craig Reynolds said, “The Magee Fire Department relies heavily on our annual gun raffle to purchase personal protective gear and equipment that we would never be able to purchase from the revenue that we receive from the town. On average, we make roughly \$15,000. Again, without this fundraiser, we would not be able to purchase the gear and equipment for our volunteers.”

Boy Scouts of America Longhouse Council President Scott Armstrong said, “All groups benefitting from raffled firearms must obey all laws and take delivery of any firearm through a federally licensed firearms dealer. Scout Councils across the state have provided safe and responsible shooting instruction, competition, and facilities to thousands of young men and women with proceeds from organizations that fund these programs through legal gun raffles. If the state were to eliminate gun raffles, it would effectively cut off the funding sources we rely on to provide quality shooting sports. Shooting is among our most popular activities with our Scouts and Venturers.”

Interlaken Guns & Ammo owner Bill McGuire said, “The bill introduced by Assemblywoman Simon to prohibit sales of raffle tickets that have a firearm as a raffle prize is very misleading. As a gun store that helps organizations with the sales of these types of raffle tickets, we can assure her that to claim one of these prizes is no different than to buy a firearm in New York State. The winner still has to fill out the federal Form 4473 and have the federal background check done prior to taking the firearms home. A person will have to be at least 18 years old to obtain a long gun and 21 years old to obtain a handgun with a New York State pistol permit. These guns do not get transferred to anyone with a criminal record. Passing a law such as this will hurt organizations that rely on the proceeds of these raffles for their yearly budgets. Also, there are many organizations that will use portions of these proceeds for charitable purposes. I hope that this bill be withdrawn.”

Waterloo Rifle & Pistol Club President Ron Pesta said, “Waterloo Rifle & Pistol Club averages \$10,000 to \$12,000 per year from our annual gun raffle. These funds allow us to continue to support the local community by offering programs that include Women On Target (WOT), safe firearms handling programs for all ages, youth programs, and working with local law enforcement. These funds also help us continually improve our facilities for these stated programs.”

Seneca County Federation of Sportsmen's Club President Dieter Kraemer said, "The Seneca County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs Inc. holds an annual gun raffle as our only fundraiser. We use the proceeds from this gun raffle to fund student scholarships, send kids to NYS DEC camp, hold youth fishing derbies, support youth pheasant and turkey hunts, and many more such activities. Without our raffle, we could no longer do this."

Wayne County SCOPE Chairman Don Smith said, "SCOPE is opposed to this bill since it is based on misleading premises and is an example of creating a problem where none exists. The author attempts to paint a firearm as a threat to public safety. More Americans believe having a gun in the home makes them safer. This belief grows every year the survey is taken. The fact remains that state and federal laws prevent the winner of a gun raffle from gaining access to the gun at the raffle event and prior to passing a FBI National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) check. This background check occurs at the gun shop from which the gun was purchased and is performed according to regulations designed by the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF). If the raffle winner is qualified as a result of the NICS check, then he or she, as a law-abiding citizen, is allowed to exercise their right guaranteed by the 2nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution."

Senator Helming represents the 54th Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming's [website](#), or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.

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