

# The Connecticut General Assembly



Monday, March 14, 2016

## **TONG, SIMMONS, COLEMAN, FLEXER CALL FOR PASSAGE OF BILL TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, EXPLOITATION**

Rep. **William Tong** and Sen. **Eric Coleman**, co-chairs of the legislature's Judiciary Committee, joined with Rep. **Caroline Simmons**, Sen. **Mae Flexer** and other legislators and advocates on Monday to call for passage of legislation created to reduce violence against women, trafficking of people and prostitution.

The goal of the legislation, HB 5623, An Act Concerning Violence Against Women and Victims of Human Trafficking, is to protect victims of domestic violence by prohibiting possession of firearms by anyone who becomes subject to a temporary restraining order upon notice of being served. In addition, the legislation seeks to combat sexual exploitation and human trafficking.

"Victims of domestic violence are highly vulnerable to further abuse, and this legislation provides comprehensive protection for them," Rep. Tong (D-Stamford, Darien) said at a press conference at the Legislative Office Building before a public hearing on the bill.

"The goal here is quite simple. We need to protect victims by temporarily removing firearms from their abusers. Connecticut would not be alone in enacting this legislation. At least twenty other states, including Massachusetts, have passed legislation authorizing or requiring the surrender of firearms at the ex parte stage. I urge my colleagues to pass this bill and send it to Governor Malloy for his signature," Tong said.

Coleman (D-Bloomfield) had planned to attend the press conference but could not because of a last-minute scheduling conflict.

"As legislators we have a duty to do everything we can to keep people safe," Rep. Simmons (D-Stamford) said. "As a woman, I am wholeheartedly supporting this legislation, which will protect women from deplorable situations involving violence, including rape, human trafficking and domestic violence."

“The overwhelming majority of residents in Connecticut recognize that this is a matter of safety,” said Sen. Mae Flexer (D-Killingly), a member of the Judiciary Committee and one of the main proponents in the Senate of last year’s temporary restraining order bill. “This is the most dangerous time in a domestic violence victim's life, and access to firearms increases a person's lethality by fivefold. Over 20 other states have already passed similar laws; now it is time for Connecticut to do so.”

“Violence against women and human trafficking are a scourge in our society that demands action on all fronts, and the Judiciary Committee has developed a comprehensive approach that can help reduce the incidence of these terrible crimes,” said Speaker of the House Brendan Sharkey (D-Hamden). “Temporarily removing firearms as part of a restraining order simply makes sense, particularly when you consider this is a volatile time period that everyone agrees is potentially the most dangerous for a victim.”

In Connecticut, there is currently no prohibition on the possession of firearms for individuals subject to a temporary restraining order. Under current law, 14 days after issuance of a temporary restraining order, a hearing is held to determine whether a “full” civil restraining order will be granted for a one-year period. If a full civil restraining order is issued, then the defendant has two business days to transfer their firearms and ammunition to either a federally licensed firearms dealer or the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection.

The days following service of a temporary restraining order and the days leading up to the first court appearance are the most dangerous for a victim of domestic violence, and the goal of this legislation is to protect victims during that time period, Tong said.

Reasons for the proposal:

- At least twenty other states, including Massachusetts, Texas, Utah and New York, have passed legislation authorizing or requiring the surrender of firearms at the ex parte stage.
- Nationally, domestic assaults involving firearms are 12 times more likely to result in fatal violence than those involving other weapons or bodily harm.
- Women in abusive relationships are 5 times more likely to be killed if their abuser has access to a firearm.
- Connecticut averaged 14 intimate partner homicides per year from 2000 to 2012 and firearms were used in 39 percent of those 188 homicides, making them the most commonly used weapon to commit intimate partner homicide in Connecticut.