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January 20, 2022

Senator Steve Lathrop, Chair, and
Members of the Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Lincoln, NE

RE: LB773 (Brewer) Provide for Carrying of Concealed Handgun Without Permit

Oppose

Dear Senator Lathrop and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

LB773 would remove the requirement of obtaining a permit to carry a concealed weapon. The League of Women Voters of Nebraska believes the proliferation of handguns and semiautomatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. In fact, firearms are the leading cause of death for children and teens resulting in 18,000 accidental deaths, suicides, homicides and injuries annually. They are the 13th leading cause of death for adults – 45,222 in 2020.

The League supports strong measures to limit the accessibility and promotes regulations regarding ownership of these weapons by private citizens to ensure consumer safety. Licensing procedures should include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal.

Not only possessing a firearm but also carrying it in public requires an advanced level of responsibility to ensure the safety of the public. Currently, to obtain a permit, one must pass a criminal background check and vision screening, not be adjudged mentally ill or incompetent, and provide proof of training. This training covers ways to avoid and diffuse a violent confrontation; safe handling of a handgun and ammunition; proper storage, including means to prevent accidental injuries to children; safe shooting fundamentals; and legal knowledge pertaining to gun purchase, ownership, transportation, possession, self-defense, justifiable homicide and various degrees of assault.

Making a mistake with a handgun or allowing an unsuitable person to carry a handgun in public can have profound consequences. While they cannot prevent all unnecessary loss of life, the process of obtaining a permit gives gun owners the knowledge and skills needed to carry responsibly. Permits are an important tool to improve public safety, and we should continue their use. Please do not advance LB773 to General File.

Thank you for considering our position and for all you do for Nebraska.

Sincerely,

Carol Dennison, Social Policy Co-Director, LWNNE
Toni Monette and MaryLee Moulton, Co-Presidents, LWNNE