New York State Conservation Council Inc.
8 East Main Street, Ilion, New York 13357-1899

MEMORANDUM IN OPPOSITION

Bill # **A 10426** Skoufis Same as **S 7890** Hoylman

Title: Establish the offense of unlawful possession of firearms by persons under twenty-one years of age.

The proposed legislation would raise the minimum age at which individuals are permitted to possess rifles and shotguns to twenty-one from the current age of sixteen. The supposition of the sponsors is that current statute represents some form of "loophole" that could potentially result in misuse.

Justification:

The Council strongly opposes this bill.

This legislation appears to be an ill-conceived and misdirected response to a single incident where, in fact, the proximate cause was not the accessibility of firearms but the failure of multiple government agencies to address a clear and present danger. The government "dropped the ball." The law abiding should not have to pay.

While this bill is advanced as necessary to "protect the public from the dangerous misuse of firearms," there is no creditable evidence that legal possession by individuals within the ages of sixteen through twenty poses a greater risk than any other age group. In fact, available data would indicate that they are in reality a much safer group.

As of this date, no state has a categorical ban on the possession of rifles and shotguns by persons eighteen of age. The vast majority of states have a minimum possession age of sixteen or less for rifles and shotguns.

The effect of this bill would be to stigmatize a whole group of young adults. 80% of the individuals who would be impacted are considered old enough to join the military (where they are allowed to use firearms), and 60% are eligible to vote. Moreover, it would impede, if not preclude completely, their participation in a wide range of training, recreational and competitive activities on the local through international levels.

Legislative effort would be more profitably directed at addressing the root cause of such incidents – the failure to deliver proper supervision and treatment of those who have been identified as posing a risk to themselves and others.

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