



STATE OF ARIZONA

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GOVERNOR

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May 27, 2008

The Honorable Jim Weiers
Speaker of the House
Arizona House of Representatives
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, Arizona 85007

Re: House Bill 2629; Justification; Defensive Display of Firearm

Dear Speaker Weiers:

Today I vetoed House Bill 2629, a bill that would have allowed the introduction of firearms into what was up to then only a word fight. This is a dangerous escalation that would have put the public's safety at risk.

House Bill 2629 purported to create a new "justification" defense that would allow an individual who reasonably believes he is under threat of unlawful physical or deadly force to display, take hold of and expose his firearm. House Bill 2629 is largely unnecessary because, with some exceptions, the current Arizona justification laws already allow a person to display, take hold of, expose and even discharge a firearm against another person if a reasonable person in his circumstances would believe he is under the threat of deadly physical force. The problematic new defense House Bill 2629 creates, however, is the ability to display, take hold of and expose a firearm when the situation is only a verbal dispute. Under current Arizona justification laws, a person is not justified in taking hold of their firearm if his fear is based only on words of the provocateur, with no related action.

There is a reason Arizona law does not allow a person in the heat of a verbal dispute, even when the exchange includes harsh words and threats, to take hold of his firearm. No one wants a war of words to escalate into a battle of bullets. This is why Arizona's law enforcement community opposes House Bill 2629. By allowing this kind of escalation, House Bill 2629 puts the public and its law enforcement officers at greater risk.

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For this and other reasons, I have vetoed House Bill 2629.

Yours very truly,



Janet Napolitano
Governor

JN:LK/jm

cc: The Honorable Timothy S. Bee
The Honorable Russell K. Pearce