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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

15 March 2013

The Honorable Gary R. Herbert  
Governor of Utah  
Utah State Capitol Complex  
350 North State Street, Suite 200  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114

Dear Governor Herbert:

Your comments in support of gun violence laws that promote common sense solutions rather than emotional responses were a welcome moment of calm in the growing storm. With this thought in mind, I urge you to veto HB 76 Concealed Weapon Carry Amendments as an ill-advised and unnecessary policy that promotes a culture of violence.

HB 76 was promoted as a way to protect ranchers, farmers, and other rural community members who may, legally, openly carry a firearm but need a concealed carry permit if they cover the weapon with a jacket. Using the excuse of protecting these individuals, HB 76 eliminates the need for a concealed carry permit, and the periodic background checks that go with it. This "solution" needlessly undermines public safety to solve a situation that is already addressed in state law. Under current Utah law, a person who wants to ensure they are acting legally when carrying a weapon can simply obtain a concealed carry permit. Permits are easy to obtain and have minimal requirements. By going through the simple permit process, the person is within the law whether openly carrying or concealing their firearm. There is no need for the bill.

Bill proponents made a small modification to the bill to require that the person without a permit carry their weapon "unloaded." This limited concession does nothing to protect the public. As you know, an unloaded gun in Utah is one with no bullet in the chamber. The gun may hold ammunition in a detachable clip, an internal magazine or the chambers of a revolver. If the weapon is fired deliberately, the temporal difference between loaded and unloaded is one or two seconds. The concealed carry permit process should not be abandoned simply because a person does not have a bullet in the chamber.

More importantly, removing all restrictions on Utahns who want to carry firearms in public parks, businesses, or any other suburban or urban locale sends the message that deadly force and intimidation are not only allowed in our state, but encouraged. HB 76 establishes a culture in Utah that prioritizes deadly weapons over human life. That is not the vision we have for Utah and I hope, and suspect, it is not your vision either.

I know you share our interest in protecting the sanctity of life. What I and the Catholic Church seek is to build on this common ground to achieve common sense gun legislation. Please veto HB 76 as a nonsensical response to a problem for which state law already provides a solution.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John C. Wester".

The Most Reverend John C. Wester  
Bishop of Salt Lake City