

State of Kansas

Senate Chamber

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Chairman Wilborn and committee members,

Per the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 1.7 million children under the age of 18 live in a home with a gun that is loaded and unlocked. These situations create a hazard for the child's health and well-being. We need to ensure parents are protecting their children by properly securing any loaded firearms in the homes. "73% of children aged nine and under reported knowing the location of their parents' firearms and 36% admitted that they had handled the weapons." American children are sixteen times more likely than their counterparts in other industrialized nations to be killed in accidental shootings. Kansas is not immune to the problem. Between 2014 and mid-October 2016 there were sixteen unintentional shootings involving minors in Kansas, four of them fatal. Three of those children were three years old or younger. Two more children were reported to be killed in accidental shootings in the following few weeks of 2016 in the Kansas City area alone.

When children have access to a loaded weapon, which is unsecured, it may result in an accidental death to themselves or to other parties that may be in the area. As a legislature, we need to ensure that every child is safe from harm and that every parent understands the need to keep their loaded weapons in locked and secured locations.

This bill does not impede a citizen's right to carry a legal firearm, but it does regulate how a gun owner should secure a loaded weapon. This is a commonsense regulation which will keep children and other innocent parties out of harm's way.

This bill would make it a class B non-person misdemeanor if a person were to leave a loaded gun, without a safety device, where a child could access it. This is not only dangerous to the child, but to other parties that may be in the room when the child discovers the loaded weapon.

I want to thank you for considering Senate bill 156. I will be glad to stand for questions.


Senator Pat Petthey