

# [Bill to ban authorities from enforcing federal gun laws could pass Ohio House within weeks](#)

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COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio House Republicans want to prevent state and local authorities from helping to enforce any federal laws or rules regarding guns or ammunition via legislation that could pass the chamber before the end of the year.

House Speaker Jason Stephens said this week that he expects [House Bill 51](#) to pass the House in 2023, sending it to the Ohio Senate for further consideration. It aims to have Ohio join [at least 17 other states](#) in deeming itself a “Second Amendment Sanctuary State.” The Republican-backed legislation reflects conservatives’ resistance to and distrust of federal gun-control laws, as well as fear that Democrats like President Joe Biden could impose even stricter rules that violate their right to bear arms.

HB51, which cleared an Ohio House Committee earlier this week, would make it illegal for any public official or employee on the state or local level to “enforce, attempt to enforce, or participate in any way in the enforcement of any federal acts, executive orders, administrative orders, rules, regulations, statutes, or ordinances regarding firearms, firearm accessories, or ammunition.”

If a state/local official or employee violates the ban, any person living or “conducting business” in the state could file a lawsuit, and their employer would be required to fire them. Any public entities that “knowingly” continue to employ such violators would face civil penalties of \$50,000 per employee.

The bill would still allow local prosecutors to refer firearms cases to a U.S. attorney’s office for potential prosecution, but only for “violent felonies” that are “substantially similar” to weapons-related criminal offenses in Ohio law, and if those weapons violations “are merely ancillary to that prosecution.”

State and local officials could use information from the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, which identifies when a recovered firearm has been used at a

different crime scene. Officials in Ohio would also still be permitted to aid federal authorities in pursuit of an out-of-state suspect, help federal officials treat injuries and avoid harm, and they could participate in inter-jurisdictional task forces that don't have the goal of enforcing federal firearms laws.

HB51's supporters, which include gun-rights advocates, say it would ensure that state and local officials couldn't be commandeered into enforcing federal firearms regulations and would instead only enforce Ohio gun laws, which GOP lawmakers have [significantly loosened in recent years](#).

"Every police officer I've talked to in the last two years has expressed their opposition to ever being forced to become Joe Biden's enforcement brigade against Ohioans," said state Rep. Mike Loychik, a Trumbull County Republican co-sponsoring the bill, in committee testimony earlier this year. "This bill protects those from ever having to make that decision whether to violate their oath of office to the Ohio Constitution or feeding their families, by removing it entirely."

However, groups representing law enforcement, prosecutors and local officials in Ohio have vocally opposed HB51, saying it would hamstring their ability to work with federal officials to prevent and solve crimes, as well as create unintended consequences such as making local governments more wary of hiring military veterans and former federal agents who had to enforce federal gun laws in their old jobs.

Critics also note that courts have overturned laws similar to HB51 in [Missouri](#) and [Oregon](#). In October, the U.S. Supreme Court [rejected an emergency request](#) by the state of Missouri to reinstate the gun law struck down by a federal judge.

"Whether someone leans more toward allowing guns or controlling guns is an important issue, but it is also important to consider how this bill impacts the authority and ability of our member communities to carry out their services and preserve the safety of their communities – an important consideration for all bills at the Statehouse," said Kent Scarrett of the Ohio Municipal League in written committee testimony. "This bill will make it harder for municipalities and their police departments to carry out their work."

Stephens, a Lawrence County Republican, told reporters Wednesday that he anticipates the full House will pass it by the end of the year.

Stephens called the legislation “an important bill.” When he was asked if the court rulings in other states gave him pause, he replied that he thought the court rulings were “a mistake” and involved laws outside of Ohio.

“That’s part of the conversation that we’re having on this issue, as far as federalism versus state power,” Stephens said. “I think that’s an interesting conversation, but I think it’s an important thing to remember our citizens.”