



Coles County Barbershop Chorus
50 Years of Memories

~2019~

Submitted Photo

This photo was taken two years ago of the singers displaying the wide variety of attire the group has worn over the years.

Coles County Barbershop holding concert in Arthur on June 29, 2021

The Coles County Barbershop Chorus has been a member of the International Barbershop Harmony Society for more than fifty years. Numerous men have sung with the CCC over the years and now they have 25 to 30 experienced singers. There are a few who just started a few years ago, but the average man has at least 12 years of experience...two of them have been singing for more than 50 years. Some are students while others are students, farmers, teachers, lawyers, doctors, auto repair and computer staffers. The group meets each Tuesday night at 7 p.m.

in the First Presbyterian Church (Mattoon) and men come from 15 different communities to sing in the group: Altamont, Arthur, Atwood, Brocton, Champagne, Charleston, Hindsboro, Newton, Oakland, Paris, St. Elmo, Strasburg, Sullivan, Sibley, and Tuscola.

In contests, they are among the top five Barbershop choruses in Illinois, and they pride themselves on community outreach. Their Christmas and Lenten Benefit Concerts provide nearly \$10,000 annually for area homeless shelter and food pantry programs and their Singing

Valentine program typically raises over \$3,000 which is given to area high school vocal music programs.

After COVID cancelled their meetings for more than a year, the first public performance of the Coles County Barbershop Chorus will be held on Tuesday night, June 29 at 7 p.m. The program is free and will be hosted at The Great Pumpkin Patch south of Arthur. All are invited to attend, bring your own lawn chairs. The Great Pumpkin Patch is located at 1749A CR 1900N, Arthur. For more details, contact Bruce Condill at 217-841-7281.



Submitted Photo

Mayor Dan Kleiss proclaimed June 14, 2021 Hop Connor Day in the City of Tuscola. Pictured is Mayor Kleiss with Hop's family, Donna Connor Walker, Hop's daughter; Kali Heckler, Hop's great-granddaughter; and Greyson Warner, Hop's great-grandson. Kleiss said "Flag Day, 2021 would have been Hop Connor's 100th birthday, it is appropriate to honor his memory and remind younger Tuscolian's of his service and spirit upon the occasion."

FOID

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allowed to own a gun.

Floor debate

The bill was backed by Illinois State Police Director Brendan Kelly. Its passage came more than two years after a shooting at an Aurora warehouse left five people dead and others injured. In starting a push for new FOID laws in 2020, Kelly said that shooter should not have had a gun because there was a 1995 felony aggravated battery conviction on his record.

During floor debate, Rep. Keith Wheeler, R-Oswego, said he had issues with some of the language in the bill, but he would vote for it because of its increased enforcement mechanisms. Wheeler said he had family connections to two people killed in the Aurora Shooting at the Henry Pratt Company warehouse.

"And just so it's clear to everyone, that (shooter) had his FOID card revoked, almost five years before that horrible incident occurred. Five years before the shooting, but law enforcement had no tools to be able to recover that (gun)," he said.

Trevor Wehner, who was

killed in the shooting on his very first day as an intern, Wheeler said, was the son of his high school classmate, Tom Wehner. Wheeler said he voted for the bill per Tom Whener's request.

"There are a lot of things in this bill that I don't love, that I don't think are going to work the way they may be intended," Wheeler said. "And I commit to all my friends in the (Second Amendment) community that we will work on getting those corrected before this bill takes effect... But this bill gives law enforcement the actual chance that necessary tools to prevent another tragedy."

Otherwise, the floor debate mirrored much of the public discourse on guns, with Republicans challenging the constitutionality of the FOID card in general and Democrats citing the need for enhanced safety measures.

Rep. Deanne Mazzochi, R-Elmhurst, said the bill does not do enough to target those who own guns illegally without a FOID card.

"It's not going to fix the outstanding problems that people are experiencing when it comes to actually getting their FOID cards," she said. "It's also not doing

anything to increase the penalties on individuals who are arrested for gun crimes without a FOID cards. It's not doing anything to mandate prosecution of people who are arrested for gun crimes without possessing a FOID card."

Other measures

The bill also creates a FOID Card Review Board to consider appeals on denied or revoked cards.

Also per the bill, anyone engaging in a private sale or transfer of a gun – including the buyer and the seller – would be required to maintain records of the sale for a period of 20 years, unless it was done through a Federal Firearms Licensee.

The bill also authorizes ISP to produce an electronic FOID and Concealed Carry License, allows the agency to provide a single card for FOID and CCL, and would update FOID and CCL renewal dates to be the same for one cardholder.

The bill also allows a card applicant to notify ISP that they would like to receive text or email notifications for renewal instead of mail reminders.



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