



GUEST EDITORIAL

Senator Craig Estes

Texas State Senate District 30

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Expanding Concealed Carry on Campus

It's time for some straight talk on our Second Amendment right to bear arms. When did we start ignoring all the facts, and assume the most dangerous among us are those who completed a criminal background check, state required training, and licensing to carry a concealed weapon?

While I respect the opposing view that concealed handguns should not be allowed on a college or university campus, it may come as a surprise to some to learn that state law already allows concealed handguns on campus so long as the weapons are not carried into a campus building.

I reject the proposition that a person licensed to carry a concealed weapon is more likely to be a threat to their professor or fellow students. Opponents are raising the specter of students shooting a professor over a bad grade, or shooting a love interest over a bad break-up. And, we are reminded that alcohol and guns do not mix, which is why state law already prohibits a concealed handgun carrier from consuming alcohol while carrying a concealed handgun.

These arguments against expanding concealed carry on campus are oddly familiar. When the state first passed the concealed carry law, opponents predicted waves of guns violence with old west style shoot outs in the streets. What we have found is what we expected to find. When you entrust law abiding citizens with the right to carry a concealed weapon they continue to be law abiding citizens.

I believe our state's concealed handgun law has made our citizens safer. I believe that concealed handgun license holders who must be at least 21 years old, have passed a criminal background check, completed state required training and licensing will be as responsible in their discretion to carry a firearm on a college campus as they are in any other area currently open to concealed firearms.

I believe our university presidents are genuine in their concern for campus safety, and I respect their opinions. We all have confidence in our university police and local law enforcement that do an outstanding job of protecting our students, staff, and faculty.

This issue, however, is not about whether local law enforcement is effective in protecting the public. The issue is an individual's constitutional right to self-defense in the critical minutes before law enforcement arrives.

When the government restricts the rights of citizens it must be for a compelling reason, and I do not believe the government has a compelling reason, given the facts and our experience, to continue the prohibition of legally carried concealed handguns in college or university buildings.

Senator Estes is Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and represents Senate District 30 covering Archer, Baylor, Clay, Collin (part), Cooke, Denton (part), Grayson, Jack, Montague, Parker, Palo Pinto, Shackelford, Stephens, Throckmorton, Wichita, Wilbarger, Wise, and Young counties.

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