



## Arizona Bill to Allow Firearms in Public Buildings Advances

On March 6, by a vote of 37 to 21, the Arizona House of Representatives passed HB 2729, a bill sponsored by Arizona State Representative David Gowan (left) of Sierra Vista. The bill, which would allow individuals to take firearms to any public building or event, is moving through the Arizona Legislature. It has passed the Arizona House and the bill's next stop was the Arizona State Senate Judiciary Committee, where it passed on March 13 by a 6 to 2 vote. Nine states already have laws which allow individuals to have firearms inside public buildings.



The bill would allow citizens to take firearms to police stations, state and local courts, municipal buildings, libraries and even the State Capitol building. The provisions, however, provide that firearms could be banned from public buildings that have metal detectors and a certified state or federal law enforcement officer or an armed security guard along with the metal detectors. HB 2729 also requires storage lockers for guns that are not taken into public buildings and the bill mandates that there must be notices posted informing the public that weapons are not permitted in the building.

The provisions would not apply to private property, however, so that an owner of an office building or a sports arena would retain the right to limit firearms on his property. The bill also does not apply to schools or colleges. Governor Brewer has cautioned in the past that otherwise good bills relating to the right to keep and bear arms could run into legal problems if schools and colleges were included.

Representative Gowan has stated that the purpose of his bill is to make sure that public buildings which purport to be gun-free truly are: "If I go into a building that says I can't carry my weapon, I want to make sure my family, friends and myself are secure." John Wentling, Vice President of Arizona Citizens Defense League, which supports the bill, calls the current practice of simply posting a ban on firearms in public buildings, "irrational" and Wentling adds: "This is public property. It's our property. Ingress and egress should be free and easy." Wentling states that if citizens do not have the right to protect themselves in public buildings, by carrying firearms, then they should be guaranteed protection by law enforcement. The bill is also supported by the National Rifle Association.

The Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police opposes the bill, citing a state legislative fiscal study that estimates security costs ranging from \$5,000 to \$113,800 per public entrance initially, with recurring costs of \$54,400 to \$108,800 per year. These costs are based upon the salary and benefits of security guards and the cost of hand-held and stationary metal detectors. John Thomas, the lobbyist for that association, states: "There is a dramatic cost associated with this. Maricopa County reports that if firearms are prohibited from all county buildings that currently do not have the security features outlined in the bill, it would cost \$19.5 million in ongoing costs and an additional \$11.3 million in one-time equipment costs."



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on March 14, 2012

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Governor Brewer vetoed a similar bill last year, although her stated reason for that veto had less to do with the merits of the proposal than the drafting of the bill. A number of bills have been moving through state legislatures this year expanding the rights of gun owners and in some states, like Arizona, multiple bills have been passing through committees and chambers of the state legislature. Although many supporters of these bills cite the rights of gun owners under the Second Amendment to the Constitution, many are also noting constitutional rights to keep and bear arms under state constitutions, which may actually provide greater rights than the Second Amendment.



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