



Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on February 28, 2011

## Texas Moves Closer to Allowing Guns on College Campuses

In one of the most controversial, but many say common-sense, moves related to campus violence and Second Amendment rights, the state of Texas is considering legislation that would allow students, professors, teachers, and other personnel to carry firearms on the campuses of elementary, middle, and high schools, as well as those of colleges and universities — without any violations or punishments.



HB 1167, introduced in the Texas House of Representatives on February 7, would require colleges and universities to allow students over the age of 21 to carry concealed handguns on campus.

The bill is being sponsored by Republican Rep. Van Taylor (picture, above), a long-time advocate for Second Amendment rights and a Life Member of the National Rifle Association, as well as head of the Freshman Second Amendment Caucus this legislative session. His office issued the following [press release](#) on the measure:

Rep. Van Taylor filed House Bill 1167, which will amend current statute in order to allow Concealed Handgun License (CHL) holders to carry concealed firearms into buildings on campuses of community colleges. Currently Texas law allows citizens to have a firearm in vehicles, whether or not he or she has a CHL, while parked on a campus of any school. Today CHL holders may legally walk with a concealed handgun on sidewalks, walkways and the grounds of any college or university.

Community and technical colleges are very different atmospheres from four-year higher education institutions," said Rep. Van Taylor. "Typically the students are older and spend less time on campus. They deserve the right of self defense off and on campus."

CHL holders must be at least 21 years old, undergo an extensive state and federal criminal records check, complete handgun safety education, and qualify using a handgun on a range. Since the law took effect in 1995, the CHL holders can legally carry handguns for protection throughout Texas and have established a 15-year record of responsible, law-abiding behavior.

"The National Rifle Association fully backs Rep. Taylor's bill to allow Texas Concealed Handgun Licensees to protect themselves on the campuses of the state's junior colleges and technical schools," said Tara Mica, NRA's state legislative liaison. "Colleges and universities are not 'crime-free zones'. While we believe in and will continue to fight for the right of Texas CHLs to defend themselves against a violent attack on the campus of ANY institution of higher education, we applaud and support Rep. Taylor's efforts to move the debate forward on this important issue."

"The Texas State Rifle Association supports this legislation," TSRA lobbyist Alice Tripp commented.

"Urban community college campuses are often located in downtown buildings, without close parking,



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with students taking night classes. Adult students with a concealed carry license deserve this self-defense option."

The legislation seems to have strong popular support, as it is widely predicted that the measure is poised to become law. More than half the members of the Texas House have signed on as co-authors, unifying even ideologically disparate elements of the legislature's Republican majority, which includes social conservatives as well as moderate Republicans such as Sen. Jeff Wentworth, who represents San Antonio. Wentworth is the only pro-abortion-choice Republican in the Texas legislature, and while earning praise from liberal groups due to his frequent 100-percent approval ratings from [NARAL Pro Choice Texas](#), he also seems to be pro-Second Amendment, having publicly declared his [support](#) for the measure:

It's strictly a matter of self-defense," said state Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio. "I don't ever want to see repeated on a Texas college campus what happened at Virginia Tech, where some deranged, suicidal madman goes into a building and is able to pick off totally defenseless kids like sitting ducks.

Texas is all too familiar with the plague of campus violence that has occurred in many universities and schools around the country over the past several years — including the infamous 1999 Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colorado, and the 2006 Virginia Tech massacre in Richmond, Virginia. The Lone Star State suffered its own "Columbine" in the University of Texas massacre in Austin on August 1, 1966, when deranged gunman [Charles Joseph Whitman](#) killed 16 people and wounded 32 others during a shooting rampage. Details would emerge later to show that his actions were spurred by numerous psychosocial and neurological traumas and risk factors, including a history of child abuse at the hands of an authoritarian father, the divorce of his parents, domestic violence, failing grades, and dismissal from the U.S. Marine Corps.

Whitman fulfilled a forensic profile commonly observed in mass murderers who suffer breakdowns and engage in genocidal public shooting rampages that necessitate the presence of armed citizens who can defend innocents and temper the violent impulses of such murderers. One such armed citizen in Tucson, Arizona — [Joseph Zamudio](#) — was able to use his weapon to restrain gunman Jared Loughner from committing further murders in the massacre that killed nine people and severely wounded Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords.

In Texas, where the Second Amendment is still respected and highly regarded by most national and state legislators, many students support the measure that would allow them to bring their licensed guns onto campus. Derek Titus, a senior at Texas A&M University, who has a state license to carry a concealed handgun, noted that someone with a gun that day in 1966 on the University of Texas campus could have improved the chances of survival of Whitman's victims. "Gun-free zones are shooting galleries for the mass murderers," he declared. "We do not feel that we must rely on the police or security forces to defend our lives."

Another state which understands this logic is Utah, the first state in the nation to allow concealed weapons on campus. Utah was also home to a notorious massacre: On February 12, 2007, armed with a shotgun and a pistol, 18-year-old [Sulejman Talovic](#) randomly shot nine people at Trolley Square Mall in Ogden, killing five. He was prevented from killing any more individuals only because of a precise violation of an anti-Second Amendment policy: An off-duty Ogden police officer carrying a concealed weapon in violation of mall policy, pinned down Talovic with gunfire until other police arrived. "Thankfully that officer disobeyed the rule of Trolley Square of having no guns," GOP state



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Representative Curt Oda asserted. Utah passed legislation later that year permitting the concealed carry of guns on college campuses — the first such blanket allowance in the country for concealed carry on campuses (as Texas is considering).

The state of Colorado also has legislation permitting the concealed carry of firearms on campuses; however, this is not a blanket allowance, as the state selectively allows individual institutions to opt out.

Texas enacted its concealed handgun law in 1995, allowing people 21 or older to carry weapons if they pass a training course and a background check. The state had 461,724 license holders as of December 31, 2010, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety.

State Senator Wentworth said he heard the "blood on the streets" warnings when the concealed handgun law was first passed. "They said we'd have shootouts at every intersection," he remembered. "None of that has happened."

Texas businesses, schools, and churches may set rules banning guns on their premises. On college campuses, however, guns are currently prohibited in buildings, dorms, and certain grounds around them. In addition to the National Rifle Association and Gun Owners of America lining up in support of the legislation, the student gun rights group Students for Concealed Carry on Campus has also been an adamant supporter of such measures in over two dozen states. (In most states where campus gun rights proposals have been raised, they have been soundly defeated in state legislatures.)

According to [Students for Concealed Carry on Campus](#), there are numerous reasons why the Texas measure would result in greater campus safety for students and all personnel on college campuses:

History is clear, stickers on campus doors saying "no guns allowed" don't stop criminal offenders. In fact, no law will ever affect criminal behavior because criminals, by their very nature, do not follow the law. What these signs actually do is create a defense-free zone, removing legal guns and forcibly disarming victims. This is exactly what makes colleges most attractive to killers who seek easy targets.

The net effect of our proposals is allowing legal weapons on campus...the very ones that could help someone make a difference in a hostile situation.

The fact remains that colleges are open environments with invisible boundaries and little to no secure prevention measures. They cannot guarantee protection to students or prevention of armed assaults. Therefore, any institution which cannot provide for protection for its visitors must not deprive those visitors of the ability to protect themselves.

The Texas bill is expected to pass once it comes up for a vote, despite opposition from university administrators in both public and private institutions.



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