

Fact Sheet:

Georgia Tech Position Regarding Weapons on Campus

Overview

- Georgia Tech supports the current Georgia law regarding possession of firearms states: *“Except as otherwise provided in subsection (c) of this Code section, it shall be unlawful for any person to carry to or to possess or have under such person's control while within a school safety zone or at a school building, school function, or school property or on a bus or other transportation furnished by the school any weapon or explosive compound.”* (§ 16-11-127.1. Carrying weapons within school safety zones, at school functions, or on school property)
- The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia is fully committed to supporting the law in its current form, which allows no weapons into its classrooms or campuses and opposes any changes in the current law.
- State Rep. Tim Bearden sponsored the House proposal and state Sen. Mitch Seabaugh, the Senate GOP whip, opened a separate debate in his chamber when he introduced a similar bill. Both measures are aimed at clarifying the state's firearms carry law to make it less confusing for law enforcement as well as gun owners, the sponsors said. They say it will simplify an often confusing list of bans that dates to the 1870s and now extends to bars, sporting events and political rallies.
- A copy of House Bill 615 can be found at http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/fulltext/hb615.htm
- A copy of Senate Bill 308 can be found at http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/fulltext/sb308.htm

Statements

- **Board of Regents Statement**

“We believe that current Georgia law, which creates school safety zones where firearms are not permitted, is very clear and has served the students, faculty, and staff of the University System of Georgia well. We are deeply concerned about proposed legislation that would permit firearms on our campuses; in our classrooms, residence halls, fraternity houses, student centers, and parking lots; and at our athletic and other public events. We do not think this promotes a safe learning environment for our students or is in the best interest of the state or of the University System.

We ask that you keep in mind that our institutions work very hard to recruit the best faculty, staff, and students across the state, the nation, and the world. The best faculty, staff, and students always have choices about where they work or attend school. Higher education is a reputation-driven industry. We believe that changing the current law prohibiting weapons on campus would have a very adverse effect on our competitive position and on the safety and well being of our students, faculty, and staff.

Our unanimous recommendation is to retain the current, unambiguous statute with respect to school safety zones as it stands. However, if new legislation is adopted, we respectfully ask for a specific exemption for University System institutions.”

Statement by the Chairman of the Board of Regents, the Chancellor, and the Institutional Leadership of the University System of Georgia, January 26, 2010

- **Georgia Tech**

Georgia Tech supports the University System of Georgia's position and feels that the current law keeps our campuses safe and is designed to protect our students, faculty, staff and visitors.

- **Georgia Tech Student Government Association**

Alina Staskevicius, Georgia Tech's student body president, testified before a House hearing noting that allowing guns onto college campuses could pose a risk to vulnerable students struggling with new relationships and overwhelming new atmospheres. She points out her concerns in this portion of her written statement.

“The Second Amendment is an addendum to the Constitution of the United States for a reason. There are many perspectives as to what this reason really is, but when properly considered, none of them should extend to allowing concealed firearms onto college campuses in Georgia. The injection of legally hidden guns to the university environment is like throwing gasoline on the already volatile fire of college life – the risk of an explosion is simply too high. It would only be a matter of time before there was an irresponsible misfire, a drunken argument that got out of hand, or maybe even a second, more easily sparked Virginia Tech incident. And when, as a current student, I think of whom this incident could kill – college students in the University System, my fellow Yellow Jackets, or the friends I have met at Georgia Tech, the people who have changed my life – it becomes real. It’s more than an amendment to the law. It’s personal. Could you justify allowing this to happen? I know that I couldn’t, and I sincerely ask that you consider students’ perspectives on this issue.” *Alina Staskevicius, 2009-10 SGA President*

Data Points

- Results from a 2009 a national random survey of campus police chiefs found that 86% disagree or strongly disagree that allowing students to carry concealed weapons on campus would prevent some or all campus killings like the situation with Virginia Tech. The survey also found that over the past five years, 35 percent of U.S. college campuses have had a firearm incident (e.g. carrying a firearm on campus, firearm stored in a residence hall, or an actual shooting). *Source: Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence*
- The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence also notes the following concerns regarding allowing guns on campus:
 - 1) Drugs and alcohol – Weapons and substance abuse are a dangerous combination.
 - 2) Suicide and mental health issues - If a gun is used in a suicide attempt, more than 90% of the time it is fatal, compared to a 3% fatality rate for suicide attempts by drug overdose
 - 3) Gun theft risks – Guns stolen from homes and cars fuel crime. College dorm rooms would be an even easier target for gun thieves.
 - 4) False sense of security – Even trained police officers, on average, hit their intended targets less than 20% of the time.
- According to the organization Students for Gun Free Schools, the overwhelming majority of the 4,314 colleges and universities in the U.S. prohibit students and faculty from carrying concealed handguns on campus (the exceptions include public colleges and universities in Utah; Blue Ridge Community College in Weyers Cave, Virginia; and Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado). Despite high-profile shootings like the ones mentioned above, homicides at American colleges and universities remain rare events.