



Written by [James Heiser](#) on December 8, 2012

Anti-gun Legislator Faces Weapons Charge

At a time when the hypocrisy of the political class has become something which is almost taken for granted, there are still some occurrences in which the pattern of “do as I say, not as I do” reaches humorous proportions.

Consider the case of Illinois State Senator Donne Trotter (D-17th district; pictured), the vociferous opponent of the right of citizens to “keep and bear arms” who has now been charged with a felony after allegedly attempting to board an airplane with a concealed handgun in his possession.



Trotter was arrested on December 5 when an agent of the Transportation Security Administration observed that a .25 caliber Beretta pistol was concealed in Trotter’s carry-on bag. Instead of his scheduled trip to Washington, D.C., Trotter went to jail facing federal charges. He was released the next day on \$25,000 bail.

According to [press reports](#), Trotter, who has served as a state senator since 1989, had been considered the leading candidate in the race for the congressional seat being vacated by Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr., who announced his resignation on November 21.

Trotter attempted to explain the presence of a gun in his carry-on luggage through an appeal to his job as a security guard; as the [ABC affiliate station in Chicago reported](#) on December 6: “Assistant state’s attorney Lorraine Scaduto said Trotter told police he left his job as a security guard late Tuesday and forgot the gun and ammunition were in his garment bag. The senator has a FOID card and was licensed to carry the weapon on his job. However, Scaduto told the court the gun was not registered in the City of Chicago.” Trotter’s employment-related license to carry provided the state senator with a right enjoyed by very few people in the state of Illinois: the ability to legally carry a weapon for his self-defense outside his own home. Illinois is the only state in the Union which still has no provision for concealed carry, and Sen. Trotter has been a vehement opponent of Second Amendment rights — including the right of concealed carry.

However, Trotter’s claims regarding substantive employment as a “security guard” are called into question by his own reports regarding his sources of income. As [reported by the Chicago Tribune](#), any income Trotter could be receiving as a “security guard” pales in comparison to his compensation as a state senator:

The state senator currently earns \$84,416 a year in his role as chairman of the Senate Democratic majority caucus. Attempts to reach officials at Allpoints Security were unsuccessful.

The Chicago-based security firm donated \$500 to Trotter’s reelection campaign last year, records show. In his economic interest statement filed with the state in April, Trotter said he did not receive more than \$1,200 in outside income from nonprofessional services during the previous 12 months.

The Chicago Sun-Times reports that “Trotter’s legislative voting record on guns doesn’t exactly align



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with his alleged actions Wednesday”:

Despite prosecutors charging him for allegedly trying to bring a gun onto an aircraft at O’Hare Airport, the South Side Democrat once voted against allowing Illinoisans to carry concealed weapons.

Trotter later voted “present” on another measure that would have softened the penalty for getting caught with a concealed weapon. ...

In 1995, Trotter was a “no” vote on a measure carried by state Sen. Kirk Dillard (R-Hinsdale) that would have legalized carrying concealed weapons in Illinois.

During floor debate, Trotter stood to challenge Dillard on the propriety of allowing Illinoisans to carry concealed weapons without having to go through extensive training or psychological evaluations.

“What you’re doing here [is] just basically creating part-time police officers who have not gone through the extensive training, who have not had the psychological evaluations, who will be getting out there who feel now that they’re — they are stronger, they are badder, they are tougher because they have this nine-shooter on their hip,” Trotter said.

It is unknown whether Trotter’s five-round Beretta made him stronger, badder, or tougher, but it may earn him one to three years in prison if convicted.

For now, Trotter’s campaign for Rep. Jackson’s seat will continue; in Illinois politics, it will apparently take more than felony charges to bring a campaign to a close. Trotter’s campaign may prove more embarrassing for both the candidate and his party than his previous bid for Congress. In 2000, while contending with then-State Senator Barack Obama for the seat of Rep. Bobby Rush (D-Ill.), Trotter claimed that Obama was insufficiently black for Rush’s seat, as was noted in a [November 29 story for NBC-Chicago](#):

Obama was a stiff University of Chicago law professor, and was uptight because he knew he was going to lose, and because his opponents were attacking him for not being black enough, and for being a tool of University of Chicago.

Nobody expressed those suspicions more baldly than Trotter. He already had a history of needling Obama about his racial identity in Springfield. Trotter and state Sen. Rickey Hendon bought a copy of *Dreams from My Father* and combed it for passages they could use to get under their colleague’s skin. Trotter also thought Obama was an ineffectual legislator who walked around the Capitol with his nose in the air — a view shared by plenty of senators in the late 1990s.

“Barack is viewed in part to be the white man in blackface in our community,” Trotter told me, during an interview at a juice bar in Bronzeville. “You just have to look at his supporters. Who pushed him to get where he is so fast? It’s these individuals in Hyde Park, who don’t always have the best interests of the community in mind.”

According to the ABC affiliate, “Politically speaking, Trotter’s problem is timing. His next court appearance is Wednesday, December 12. The Democrats meet to decide which candidate they will endorse on December 15.” Time — and, perhaps, the action of the court on December 12 — will determine the candidate’s political future. However, whoever eventually fills the seat in Congress now being vacated by Jackson, it is unlikely that they will easily prove more embarrassing to President Obama than Trotter has already proven to be.



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Photo of Illinois State Senator Donne Trotter: AP Images



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