



Written by [James Heiser](#) on July 20, 2010

Texas Lobbyists Plan to “Pack Heat” at Capitol

Success or failure for a political lobbyist often comes down to access; without easy access to legislators, it is naturally much harder to apply the pressure to drive legislation in the desired direction. But lobbyists in Austin, Texas, may soon begin applying a variation on Chairman Mao’s saying, “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun” — albeit not in the way the Marxist dictator had in mind.



The possible trend toward lobbyists “packing heat” may come about due to an aspect of Texas’ laws regulating concealed handgun licenses (CHL). [Over 402,000](#) Texans have been issued a CHL, and the number is growing rapidly, with 138,000 of those licenses issued in 2009 alone.

The 402,000 licenses are far from a trivial number, although they do only amount to approximately 1.6 percent of the population of the Lone Star State. But lobbyists are now being drawn to get a CHL because possession of such a license allows faster access to the state capitol.

[According to an ABC News story:](#)

A unique loophole in a new security procedure means a gun permit is like a special-access pass into the domed building, allowing people who are certified to carry a gun to bypass lines at the metal detectors that were set up after a shooting incident earlier this year.

"Nobody wants to be the one standing in line behind three hundred kids wearing the same colored T-shirt," said University of Texas political scientist Jim Henson. "If you're trying to get in and out really quick and there's going to be choke points, well, people don't want to have to deal with that."

There's now a frenzy for folks to get trained and licensed to carry a firearm, especially before the legislative session begins in January. It's not required that people have a gun to enter the Capitol through the express lane. Merely holding a valid permit, and presenting it at the entrance, will get them expedited entry.

"Everybody is doing it or is planning to do it," said lobbyist Bill Miller, who has taken the required training and is waiting for his license to arrive in the mail.

The special lane for CHL bearers was set up to guarantee that those individuals who have a legal right to carry a concealed firearm within the Capitol may do so without removing it from the place where it is concealed. But now some lobbyists seem interested in using a CHL as a political "speedpass" to bypass waiting in line with the general public.

Of course, the process is quite a bit more complicated than some reporters might imagine. The application process does require a minimum of 10 hours of instruction in the laws related to carrying a concealed handgun, and applicants must demonstrate their competence and proficiency with a firearm.



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Every applicant is fingerprinted and undergoes a comprehensive background check. Although many applicants may have their application processed within 60 days, the state is permitted to take as many as 180 days to process an application. At a cost of several hundred dollars for the license and classes, as well as the inconvenience of scheduling the class and examination, applying for a CHL is not a trivial matter.

Whether or not lobbyists will actually make up more than a small statistical anomaly among applicants, a growing number of law-abiding Texans are going to the trouble of getting their CHL — and not because they want speedy entrance to the Capitol. Rather, many Texans are afraid that law enforcement is no longer doing enough to protect the public, and they are getting the training they need to protect themselves, if necessary.

[According to public documents](#), the Texas Department of Public Safety issued over 138,000 concealed handgun licenses in 2009. Several interesting facts are revealed by a perusal of the data on applicants. First, applicants come from every age group, beginning with applicants as young as 18 years of age all the way to two applicants who were 96. The largest group of applicants (3,573, or 2.57 percent of the total), when sorted by age, came from those who were 62 years old. Nearly 87 percent of applicants in 2009 were white; approximately 78 percent of applicants were male.

"Gun control" fanatics are, of course, livid at the idea of citizens exercising their second amendment rights. In the words of the ABCNews report:

That lawmakers would take the trouble to install magnetometers and then allow weapons inside has drawn criticism from gun-control advocates, including the Brady [sic] Washington-based Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, which called the policy "ludicrous." Some tourists also were perplexed by the new procedures.

"Where's the security come from if you can still get in with a gun?" asked Canadian tourist Clyde Ducharme, who went through the metal detectors one recent morning.

Turning to someone from the Brady Campaign for insight on such a topic is what is ludicrous. As the story points out, possession of a firearm at the Capitol was, at least until recently, not illegal. Many categories of individuals are [excluded](#) from applying for a CHL: Felons, those within five years of a conviction for a Class A or B misdemeanor or who are currently under indictment cannot apply for a CHL; neither, for that matter, can individuals who are delinquent on their taxes or child support payments. In short, successful applicants for a Texas CHL are pretty much the definition of law abiding citizens. Given that fact, and the constitutional guarantees of the Second Amendment, why shouldn't they be allowed to carry their firearms?

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