



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on September 2, 2024

Lafayette University Forced to Rescind Downtown “Gun-free Zone” Designation

Lafayette University officials [rescinded its designation](#) of the Lafayette Science Museum in downtown Lafayette, Louisiana, as a “gun-free zone” last Wednesday following receipt of a letter from an attorney representing Gun Owners of America (GOA). Because the designation covers a 1,000-foot radius, because it also includes nearby two hotels being used by university students as dormitories, and because of the University’s large presence (nearly 20,000 students) in Lafayette (population 121,000), the designation turned nearly all of the town into a “gun-free zone.”



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[The letter](#), sent from the law office of Joshua Barnhill to the town mayor, the chiefs of police for the city and for the university, and the president of the university, was a doozy:

I represent Gun Owners of America ... request[ing] that you withdraw your erroneous “designat[ion]” of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Science Museum ... and a surrounding 1,000-foot radius as a “firearm-free zone,” and that certain signage and online maps reflecting the same be removed and corrected immediately....

[You appear] to be relying on a mistaken premise that the Science Museum is part of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette’s school campus and is therefore a “firearm-free zone.”

That is not the case.

It’s Not the Case Because:

1. The university doesn’t own the museum;
2. It only operates the museum under a lease and not as a school;
3. The university doesn’t identify the museum as part of its campus on its campus map;
4. The state’s attorney general has declared that the museum “does not fall under the definition of a ‘firearm-free zone’”;
5. Under the Supreme Court’s *Bruen* decision, citizens have the constitutionally guaranteed right not only to “keep” but also to “bear” arms in public; and
6. The state has a “preemption” statute in place that prevents entities like the university from issuing laws that are more restrictive than state law concerning firearms.

Therefore, wrote Barnhill, “any attempt by LPD (Lafayette Police Department) to enforce the newly ‘designated’ ‘firearm-free zone’ around the Science Museum would be both unlawful and unconstitutional.”



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Five Days to Respond

Barnhill gave the officials five days to respond to his demand, or else. “GOA has authorized my office to file suit and seek all appropriate remedies,” he said.

He reminded them that GOA successfully quashed a similar attempt of the City of New Orleans to “designate” most of the French Quarter a “gun-free zone”:

GOA previously prepared such filings against the City of New Orleans, prior to that city’s rescinding its unlawful designation of a police precinct station as a “firearm-free zone.”

He ended his letter with this:

Please consider this letter carefully. Your actions between today [Thursday, August 22] and Tuesday [August 27] will determine who the defendants are in GOA’s impending lawsuit (currently in preparation).

This letter no doubt galvanized the officials he addressed into action. They complained that five days wasn’t enough time to consider how to respond, but Barnhill was adamant and immovable.

Officials Backed Down — Sort Of

On Wednesday, August 28, the [university publicly responded](#). They said that after seeking “additional clarifications” from various sources,

the University has removed the “Safe School Zone” signs erected at the Science Museum and at the [nearby] hotels being used as temporary student housing, because they are not owned by the University.

They added, however:

The University has replaced “Safe School Zone” signs with “Weapons-Free Facility” signage that precludes firearms within these facilities but does not establish any [such “gun-free”] zones outside them.

Although the university doesn’t own the Science Museum, it claims it as part of its campus. Therefore, it says, it is part of the entire campus’ “gun-free zone” designation. As *Ammoland* author John Crump noted, “It remains to be seen if more pressure will be placed on the University to remove the gun-free signs within the museum.”

It’s a partial victory for the Second Amendment. But it exposes the intransigence of those opposed to it who continue to seek its emasculation



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