



University of Texas Panel Recommends Concealed Carry in Classrooms

A University of Texas at Austin panel has recommended that campus policy permit concealed handguns in classrooms. The recommendations are part of an overall effort by the university to comply with Governor Abbott's "campus carry" law that was signed into law last spring and will take effect on August 1, 2016.

According to the *Washington Post*, the campus carry law permits university presidents to develop campus-specific rules. UT President Greg Fenves established the Campus Carry Policy Working Group, comprised of faculty, staff, students, and alumni, to recommend to him implementation policies for the new law. The group released a report on Thursday with its recommendations, which will be reviewed by UT President Greg Fenves before a final vote of university regents.

The report's summary states that the panel is aware that the subject of guns on campus is a sensitive one. "The working group is aware of, and sympathetic to, the overwhelming sentiment on campus that concealed carry should not be permitted in classrooms," [it](#) reads.

The report also indicates that every member of the panel, including gun owners, "thinks it would be best if guns were not allowed in classrooms."

However, after careful consideration, the panel determined it "does not recommend that classrooms should be designated a gun-exclusion zone."

According to the report, the decision was reached after lengthy deliberation:

The Working Group consulted extensively with the University community. Our online survey generated more than 3,300 comments, and we received and considered numerous other submissions from scores of departments and schools, student groups, professional associations and organizations, individuals and the Faculty Council. We conducted public forums, which were attended by approximately 400 people. Both events were livestreamed, and the recordings were then posted on our website. The second forum alone garnered nearly 32,000 views. We also researched the applicable legal and regulatory regimes of the seven states where campus carry has already been mandated and reached out to representatives of campuses in those states.

The report states that while a large majority of the comments they received expressed serious concerns about the new law, a large number of comments favored it.





Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 11, 2015

Through its research of states that already permit campus carry, the panel found substantial evidence that there is no connection between campus carry and campus violence, nor is there a causal link between campus carry and increased rates of sexual assault.

The report lists a total of 25 recommendations, grouped into four categories: how the guns are to be carried and stored, where they are to be carried, incidental implementations of the policy, and proactive measures. The recommendations state that the handguns must remain in a securely locked privately owned vehicle, or on or about the carrier at all times. They cannot be brought to premises of a pre-K through 12 school such as UT Elementary School, nor can they be brought to areas under which state or federal law prohibits, such as the UT Nuclear Engineering Teaching Laboratory or on-campus childcare facilities. The panel also recommends that the university ensures that it has adequate mental health services, and that it gathers and analyzes data involving the effects of campus carry.

The panel gave careful consideration to asking the university to provide gun lockers at strategic points around campus in order to comply with the law while still excluding guns from classrooms, but found in its research that doing so would increase the risk of certain dangers, such as accidental discharge.

The report comes days before a pro-gun rights protest wherein student groups Come and Take It Texas and Dontcomply.com will stage demonstrations featuring cardboard guns and fake blood that replicate a mass shooting.

A Facebook description of the event reads, "In the wake of yet another gun free zone shooting, Obama is using it to aggressively push his gun confiscation agenda. Now is the time to stand up, take a walk, speak out against the lies and put an end to the gun free killing zones."

Gun rights advocates such as John Lott, president of the Crime Prevention Research Center and author of *More Guns, Less Crime*, have oft observed that mass public shootings almost exclusively occur in gun-free zones. In an article that appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* earlier this year, Lott wrote:

Since at least 1950, all but two public mass shootings in America have taken place where general citizens are banned from carrying guns. In Europe, there have been no exceptions. Every mass public shooting has occurred in a gun-free zone. And Europe is no stranger to mass shootings. It has been host to three of the six worst K-12 school shootings and by far the worst mass public shooting perpetrated by a single individual.

Lott also cited several shooters, including the Aurora movie theater gunman and the Charleston, South Carolina, shooter, who admitted to targeting certain areas because they were gun-free zones. "Gun-free zones are a magnet for those who want to kill people," Lott opined.

Fox News notes that the University of Texas in Austin was the site of one of the deadliest mass shootings in American history. In 1966, Charles Whitman, a former Marine and expert marksman, sat atop the central clock tower on campus and for 90 minutes, fired at the people below. By the end of his rampage, he killed 16 people and injured 30 others.

Governor Abbott's campus carry law is set to take effect on the 50th anniversary of that shooting.



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