

Texas Students for Concealed Carry - Press Releases - Feb. 17 - Mar. 3, 2016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 02/17/2016

SCC's Preliminary Response to Campus Carry Policies Approved by UT-Austin President Gregory Fenves

AUSTIN, TX - Over the past two months, Students for Concealed Carry has [repeatedly](#) explained [how](#) two of the proposals of UT-Austin's campus carry working group [violate](#) the intent of Texas's new [campus carry law](#) and how one of those proposals greatly increases the odds that a license holder will suffer an accidental discharge on campus. Unfortunately, UT-Austin President Gregory Fenves chose to punt the issue to the courts rather than stand up to a [cabal](#) of fear-mongering professors.

SCC is confident that the university's gun-free-offices policy and empty-chamber policy will not stand up to [legal scrutiny](#); therefore, our Texas chapter will now shift its focus to litigation. Simultaneously, we will continue to work with the governor's office to explore the [possibility](#) of getting a clarification of the campus carry law added to Governor Abbott's impending call for a special legislative session to address school finance.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 02/23/2016

What other laws should public colleges be allowed to "opt out" of?

AUSTIN, TX - Following the announcement that UT-Austin President Gregory Fenves will, in accordance with [Texas Senate Bill 11](#), allow the licensed concealed carry of handguns in most university classrooms, numerous pundits and media outlets are once again calling for Texas legislators to allow public colleges to opt out of the state's new "campus carry" law. In a February 23 [editorial](#), the *Austin American-Statesman* argues, "Public university officials should have the same authority as private campuses to opt out of campus carry." This raises an obvious question: In what other areas does the *Statesman's* editorial board think public colleges should have the same authority as private colleges?

Should public university officials be allowed to require church attendance by students or to prohibit same-sex dating relationships between students? Should they be allowed to limit student speech to only that which aligns with a certain religion or ideology? What if such restrictions are what a majority of students, faculty, and staff really, really want? Shouldn't the majority opinion on campus trump an unpopular law?

The reality is that private schools have always operated under [vastly different rules](#) from their public counterparts, and that dichotomy is why Texas' new campus carry law establishes one standard for public colleges and another for private colleges. The same private universities that can dictate which sociopolitical causes students are allowed to support and which movies students are allowed to see can prohibit licensed concealed carry on campus. However, the same state universities that must honor freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc., must also honor a state-issued license to carry a handgun.

SB 11 passed through the Texas Legislature by a wide margin. And contrary to the claims of anti-campus carry activists, those lawmakers were acting in accordance with the wishes of their constituents—[two](#) 2015 [polls](#) (the only impartial polls on the subject) conducted as a joint effort of the *Texas Tribune* and the University of Texas at Austin found more Texans in support of campus carry than opposed to it. Whether campus carry has broad support on a particular campus is not the legislature's concern.

[Antonia Okafor](#), Southwest regional director for Students for Concealed Carry, commented, "Campus carry hasn't led to the downfall of the University of Utah or the University of Colorado, and it won't be the downfall of the University of Texas. I have little sympathy for the argument that campus carry is an unpopular law, given that just fifty years ago, the law allowing someone like me to attend the University of Texas was itself an unpopular law. There is a reason we don't pass laws the same way we vote for the next *American Idol*."

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 02/23/2016

Why are professors more afraid of guns carried legally than illegally?

AUSTIN, TX - A [slide show](#) at a recent University of Houston faculty senate meeting suggested that professors may want to "be careful discussing certain topics" or "drop certain topics from [their] curriculum" when the state's new campus carry law takes effect. This begs the question: Why should professors be more concerned about the licensed, carefully vetted students who'll be carrying guns **legally** than about the unlicensed, unvetted students who may already be carrying guns **illegally**?

During a January 26 [hearing](#) of the Texas Senate Committee on State Affairs, Joan Neuberger, professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin and co-chair of the [Gun Free UT](#) steering committee, testified, "Students come to speak to me in my office all the time....The reason that they can come talk to me and my colleagues is because we create an environment in the classroom that is an environment of absolute trust and respect. And I don't think I can do this if I don't know if the person sitting next to me is carrying a gun in their backpack." Ironically, Dr. Neuberger already doesn't know if the person sitting next to her is carrying a gun in his or her backpack.

College campuses like the University of Texas and the University of Houston are open environments—there are no metal detectors or bag checks. A person can just as easily walk into a classroom carrying a backpack full of guns as carrying a backpack full of books. The concerns of Dr. Neuberger and the UH faculty senate are indicative of the mindset that the real danger stems not from criminals who disregard the law but from lawfully armed citizens who suddenly "snap." However, that assumption is not borne out by the facts.

Various studies by [forensic psychologists](#) and the [U.S. Department of Justice](#) have concluded that the notion of someone simply "snapping" and committing mass murder is a myth. Also, [statistics from the Texas Department of Public Safety](#) suggest that a Texan with a concealed handgun license (CHL)/license to carry (LTC) is only about 1/7 as likely to commit aggravated assault with a deadly weapon as is an unlicensed Texan. Furthermore, the [final report](#) of the campus carry policy working group at the University of Texas at Austin concluded, "Our examination of states that already have campus carry revealed little evidence of campus violence that can be directly linked to campus carry, and none that involves an intentional shooting....Most respondents reported that campus carry had not had much direct impact on student life or academic affairs."

There is simply no justification for a professor who has previously expressed little or no concern about the possible **illegal** presence of guns in his or her classroom to decide to soften his or her curriculum because of the possible **legal** presence of guns in his or her classroom.

SCC Southwest Director Antonia Okafor commented, "Do these professors not think that the type of person who'd pull a gun during a classroom debate might also ignore an honor-system-based law prohibiting guns on campus? Do they honestly feel better knowing that any guns in their classrooms are being carried by individuals with a complete disregard for both school policy and state law?"

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Campus carry isn't bad for higher education; paranoia about campus carry is.

AUSTIN, TX - In enlightened modern America, the risk of dying of a shark attack is most frequently referenced in comparison to one's odds of winning the Powerball lottery, but in the summer of 1975, America's coastal tourism business took a major hit as a result of the June release of the world's first summer blockbuster—*Jaws*. The risk of dying from a shark attack was just as low then as it is today—in fact, there were no fatal shark attacks in U.S. waters that year—but a cinema-inspired nationwide bout of galeophobia (fear of sharks) had real, negative consequences on the nation afflicted.

In a [speech](#) delivered February 4 at the 2016 National Prayer Breakfast, U.S. President Barack Obama said, "The consequences of [fear] can be worse than any outward threat." That statement is reflected throughout America's checkered past, from fear of witchcraft leading to twenty executions in Salem, Mass., to fear of vaccines leading to a resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases. Now, Texas is seeing fear of campus carry take a real, measurable toll on the state's institutions of higher education. However, just as witches were not to blame for the Salem witch trials, and just as vaccines are not to blame for the negative results of the anti-vaccine movement, campus carry is not to blame for the current atmosphere of fear on Texas college campuses.

The professors threatening to [resign their positions](#) or [remove controversial material](#) from their curricula have no more basis for their actions than did the people who canceled summer vacation plans 41 years ago. All available evidence suggests that licensed concealed carry will not make Texas college campuses any less safe. The [report](#) of UT-Austin's campus carry policy working group notes, "Our examination of states that already have campus carry revealed little evidence of campus violence that can be directly linked to campus carry, and none that involves an intentional shooting...We found that the evidence does not support the claim that a causal link exists between campus carry and an increased rate of sexual assault. We found no evidence that campus carry has caused an increase in suicide rates on campuses in other states." The report goes on to state, "We reached out to 17 research universities in the seven campus-carry states...Most respondents reported that campus carry had not had much direct impact on student life or academic affairs."

Those findings are consistent with [the preponderance of peer-reviewed studies](#) on licensed concealed carry—including a [2015 study from Texas A&M University](#)—which have found that concealed carry cannot be shown to lead to an increase in violent crime. [Statistically](#), a Texan is significantly more likely to be struck by [lightning](#) than to be murdered or negligently killed by a concealed handgun license (CHL)/license to carry (LTC) holder. Texas CHL/LTC holders are convicted of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon at 1/7 the rate of unlicensed Texans (NOTE: that statistic includes all Texas children in the number of unlicensed Texans; the contrast is even greater when only adults are counted). Therefore, what basis do these professional academics—men and women trained to rely on empirical data when drawing conclusions—have for taking actions as drastic as resigning their positions or dumbing-down course materials?

When a member of a hate group bombs a house of worship, society doesn't blame the worshipers for scaring the attacker to the point of violence; we blame the fearmongers and hate speakers who taught the attacker to fear and hate what he doesn't understand. Neither Texas's new campus carry law, the legislators who passed it, nor the activists who pushed it are responsible for the actions of professors overwhelmed by unjustified fear. Intellectually, these professors are no different than someone whose actions are defined by an irrational fear of sharks, witchcraft, or vaccines. We can pity them for their inability to function rationally, but we must not acquiesce to their phobic delusions.

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SCC's Preliminary Response to the University of Houston's Draft Campus Carry Policy

AUSTIN, TX - The University of Houston's [draft campus carry policy](#) is a major improvement over the policy proposed by the University of Texas; however, the UH policy is too aggressive in attempting to prohibit licensed concealed carry in any location where minor children may be present, something the Texas Legislature never intended.

Students for Concealed Carry commends the University of Houston campus carry task force for avoiding the types of overreaching policies [proposed by the University of Texas](#) and for having the foresight to propose policies such as making community gun storage available at the campus police station and allowing faculty and staff to temporarily store handguns in locked desks or cabinets.

SCC's one concern with the UH draft policy is that the task force seems to have operated under the assumption that licensed concealed carry cannot be allowed anywhere children are likely to be present. This was clearly never the intent of the Texas Legislature, which saw fit to allow licensed concealed carry in movie theaters, shopping malls, churches, grocery stores, restaurants, all state museums, all public libraries, and even the Texas Capitol. SCC hopes to see the UH policy refined so that, with regard to locations where children may be present, licensed concealed carry is only prohibited at day care facilities and primary/secondary schools—the locations dictated by state law.

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SCC makes anti-campus carry conspiracy theorists an offer they can't refuse.

AUSTIN, TX - In response to anti-campus carry activists at the [University of Texas](#) and the [University of Houston](#) who espouse the conspiracy theory ([started](#) by the gun-control group [Everytown for Gun Safety](#)) that Students for Concealed Carry (SCC) was founded by and is funded by well-financed groups within the Tea Party, libertarian, and gun-rights movements, SCC announced today that it will donate \$5,000 to any gun-control group—or to any 501(c)(3) non-profit organization designated by the gun-control group—that can, by March 31, 2016, prove any of the following:

1. The national organization Students for Concealed Carry (SCC)/Students for Concealed Carry on Campus (SCCC) currently receives or previously received regular funding from one or more of the following organizations:
 - A. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC);
 - B. The Leadership Institute (LI);
 - C. CampusReform.org;
 - D. Gun Owners of America (GOA);
 - E. The Second Amendment Foundation (SAF);
 - F. The Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms (CCRKBA);
 - G. The National Association for Gun Rights (NAGR);
 - H. Texas Gun Rights (TXGR);
 - I. The Crime Prevention Research Center (CPRC);
 - J. The National Rifle Association (NRA);
 - K. The National Rifle Association Institute for Legislative Action (NRA-ILA);
 - L. The Texas State Rifle Association (TSRA);

- M. Any national or statewide gun-rights group, Second Amendment organization, firearms trade organization, or firearms manufacturer;
 - N. The Tea Party Patriots;
 - O. Tea Party Express;
 - P. Tea Party Nation;
 - Q. National Tea Party Federation (NTPF);
 - R. The Nationwide Tea Party Coalition;
 - S. FreedomWorks;
 - T. Americans for Tax Reform;
 - U. Americans for Prosperity (AFP);
 - V. Any Tea Party organization;
 - W. Charles G. Koch and/or David H. Koch (aka the Koch brothers);
 - X. Any political party;
 - Y. Any political campaign; or
 - Z. Any political action committee;
2. The Texas chapter of Students for Concealed Carry/Students for Concealed Carry on Campus currently receives or previously received regular funding from one or more of the organizations listed in claim #1;
 3. One or more of the organizations listed in claim #1 played a role in the conception and/or founding of Students for Concealed Carry/Students for Concealed Carry on Campus;
 4. One or more of the organizations listed in claim #1 provided startup capital to Students for Concealed Carry/Students for Concealed Carry on Campus;
 5. One or more of the organizations listed in claim #1 have or had a leadership role in or measure of governance over Students for Concealed Carry/Students for Concealed Carry on Campus; or
 6. Students for Concealed Carry/Students for Concealed Carry on Campus has ever been governed or controlled by any individual or organization other than the directors publicly named by SCC/SCCC at that time;

Antonia Okafor, Southwest director for Students for Concealed Carry, commented, "Since being founded in 2007 by college students shocked by the Virginia Tech massacre, Students for Concealed Carry has faced occasional [rumors](#) about its origins and funding. Such rumors are without factual basis but serve opponents' intended purpose of derailing any discussion of [the facts](#) of campus carry."

The currently circulating conspiracy theory—specifically, that SCC is a Tea Party front funded and directed by some combination of the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the Leadership Institute (LI), and/or Gun Owners of America (GOA)—stems from a July 5 [article](#) in *The Trace*, the [official publication](#) of the gun-control group Everytown for Gun Safety. While it's fair to assume that *The Trace* is no more impartial on issues of gun rights than is the NRA publication *America's First Freedom*, SCC doesn't need to rely on ad hominem attacks to rebut the article's claims.

In its 3,252 words, the *Trace* article, titled "The Secret History of the Campus Carry Movement," offers only two pieces of evidence—both circumstantial—to support its claims. First, it notes that the Leadership Institute offers grants to campus-based conservative groups. Second, it notes that the Leadership Institute and Gun Owners of America together advertised in 2006 that they were looking for college students to start "pro-gun" groups on university campuses. Neither of those facts has any connection to the founding, funding, or administration of Students for Concealed Carry.

The Leadership Institute's grant program gives money to small campus groups, not large national organizations. Several of SCC's campus chapters have applied for and received one-time \$500 startup grants from the Leadership Institute, but that money was awarded to individual campus chapters, not SCC's Texas chapter or national organization. For example, SCC's University of Texas or University of Houston chapter might get \$500 to help with purchasing signs, T-shirts, tabling supplies, etc.; however, SCC's state and national leaders would never see any of that money or even know about it unless someone from that campus chapter happened to mention it to them. Donations received at the campus level help that chapter establish itself on campus but do not help SCC's state-level lobbying efforts and do not influence SCC's agenda, which is set at the national level. Because SCC does not provide funding to campus chapters, campus chapters are free to seek funding as they see fit.

As for LI and GOA placing a 2006 advertisement expressing interest in starting "pro-gun" groups on college campuses, that is what is known as a coincidence (a coincidence that nobody at SCC was aware of until *The Trace* reported on it). Presumably, the author of the article dug up LI and GOA's ten-year-old advertisement and drew his own conclusions.

Far from "laying the groundwork for SCC," this effort by LI and GOA seems to have gone nowhere, as there was no sign of it a year later when SCC was founded by a political science major at the University of North Texas, in response to the mass shooting at Virginia Tech. Two months after starting SCC, that UNT student got tired of working forty hours a week at an unpaid job and stepped down. Four other unpaid volunteers then stepped up, took over, and developed an organizational structure that allowed SCC to evolve from a Facebook group and [one-page website](#) into the thriving organization it is today. Any one of those five founders would have jumped at an offer of funding (particularly, as the article claims, a \$50,000/year salary), but no such offer was ever made.

Contrary to the claims made by *The Trace*, no preexisting organization had any hand in the founding of SCC, no outside organization has ever provided regular funding to SCC, and no organization has ever provided salaries to SCC leaders (who are all unpaid volunteers). SCC has occasionally received help or cooperation from outside organizations, but such help has always been limited in scope. For example, when SCC's Texas chapter held a fundraising drive to raise money to air a [pro-campus carry television commercial](#) (to combat the [\\$80,000](#) anti-campus carry [ad buy](#) by Everytown for Gun Safety), the Citizens Committee for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms (CCRKBA) donated \$1,500, and GOA donated \$500. Those are the two largest cash donations SCC or any of its state chapters have ever received from an outside group.

A much more common type of outside help comes in the form of groups cosponsoring events with SCC or working with SCC to push legislation (e.g., SCC and the Second Amendment Foundation co-hosted two national conferences on campus carry; SCC, the NRA, and the Texas State Rifle Association frequently shared information when working to pass campus carry in Texas). Such cooperation among organizations with a shared goal is not unusual—it does not equate to an outside organization secretly directing or funding SCC and doesn't amount to anything resembling the type of conspiracy claimed by SCC's opponents.

In a February 29 [op-ed](#) published in *Quartz* (QZ.com), Lina del Castillo, assistant professor of history at the University of Texas at Austin, describes SCC as "the most visible, well-funded peddler of misleading information on pro-campus carry in the nation" (not surprisingly, the phrase "well-funded" links to the July 5 article from *The Trace*). If Ms. Del Castillo could see SCC's financial statements or witness the sacrifices SCC's leaders have made to keep the organization alive, she would be embarrassed for making that claim. Unlike Everytown for Gun Safety, SCC has no wealthy benefactor or rich donors footing the bill. SCC owes its existence to the small cash donations and huge time donations made by its members. The people who write SCC's [press releases](#) and [testify](#) on behalf of SCC at Senate hearings and [promote](#) SCC on college campuses all do so without compensation, because they believe in and care about this cause.

Opponents' claims about SCC's founding and funding are untrue and unproductive. Those opponents would do well to remember that intellectually honest people can disagree on questions of policy without resorting to conspiracy theories or baseless conjecture to undermine their opponents' views.

Excerpt from SCC's [Mission Statement](#) (which hasn't changed since the organization's founding, when it was known as Students for Concealed Carry on Campus):

Both the membership and the leadership of SCCC are made up of individuals with very diverse political backgrounds. Among SCCC's leaders you'll find conservatives, moderates, liberals, Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, Independents, etc. The members of SCCC look beyond partisanship, toward the common goal of achieving state laws and school policies based on factual evidence rather than emotional rhetoric.

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Students for Concealed Carry on Campus is not affiliated with the NRA, a political party, or any other organization.

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ABOUT STUDENTS FOR CONCEALED CARRY — [Students for Concealed Carry](#) (SCC) is a national, non-partisan, grassroots organization comprising college students, faculty, staff, and concerned citizens who believe that holders of state-issued concealed handgun licenses should be allowed the same measure of personal protection on college campuses that current laws afford them virtually everywhere else. SCC is not affiliated with the NRA or any other organization. For more information on SCC, visit [ConcealedCampus.org](#) or [Facebook.com/ConcealedCampus](#). For more information on the debate over campus carry in Texas, visit [WhyCampusCarry.com](#).

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