

Texas Students for Concealed Carry - Press Releases - Feb. 17 - Mar. 1, 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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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 02/25/2016

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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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 03/01/2016

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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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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