

Testimony on HB 2353
House Federal and State Affairs Committee
January 25, 2012
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Good Afternoon. I am Brenda Granger. I live outside of Douglass, in Butler County. In 2009, I received my concealed carry license from the State of Kansas. In order to receive it, I had to pass a class on the Kansas Personal and Family Protection Law. Both my husband and I took a class which covered where a concealed carry license holder can and cannot carry a gun, and under what circumstances we are allowed to use it. We also had to pass a basic marksmanship test, which also allowed our instructor to observe if we followed safe gun handling practices. There are a variety of approved instructors, but the class fee runs somewhere from \$55 on up.

After we passed the class, we each had to submit an application and get fingerprinted for our background checks, which was another \$150 apiece back then; it is a little less now. I've never been in trouble with the law more than a ticket in all my 52 years, so I wasn't worried about passing the background check. But it was a bit intimidating to get my fingerprints taken. Once we received our approvals from the Kansas Attorney General's office, we had to take the fingerprint records to the DMV to get our pictures taken, and of course, pay another fee. In addition to those expenses, we've bought safety equipment, gun safes, holsters, ammo, more guns, non-resident concealed carry licenses for other states, etc., totaling well over \$2,000. If I didn't think carrying a gun was important, I wouldn't spend the money. But what price would you put on your life or a loved one's?

After my husband and I finished homeschooling our two sons, I enrolled at Butler Community College. Every time I set foot on campus, I pray that there will not be a situation like Virginia Tech or one of the other school shootings we've heard about in the news. I doubt I will ever take any classes at WSU because it is located in a high crime area, and yet I would be forbidden to carry my firearm once I got out of my car. Because if you've noticed like I have, most mass shootings happen at schools, post offices, and other places where it is against the law to bring a gun. Just making it against the law only improves the odds for a killer; it doesn't really keep out guns.

I originally applied for the concealed carry license because my husband wanted both of us to get them, and that way I wouldn't be breaking the law if he left a loaded gun with me while I waited in our car. I started carrying every time I left the house after I had this nightmare about what could happen if I was attacked while I was sitting in traffic. I've never been a scaredy-cat type of person, but that nightmare woke me up to the possibility that there could be an occasion where the only way to avoid being a victim would be to quickly draw and shoot a loaded gun. I've come to the realization that I can't always rely on someone else for protection, because crime can happen anywhere, anytime, not just late at night or in "bad areas of town." The only thing that will even the odds between a young, strong, probably male, criminal and this old, overweight woman with arthritis and heart problems, is if I have a loaded gun, know how to use it, and am willing to do so, if there is no other way to stop the threat.

I, along with close to 40,000 other Kansans with concealed carry licenses, plus many from other states, carry a gun almost everywhere we go. Every time you go out to eat or go shopping, there is a good chance that someone has a loaded gun that you will never know about, because we aren't the people who are out to harm you. I've carried places you would never guess, and even people who have known me for years never have a clue that I'm armed. We like it that way, because then we will have the element of surprise if a criminal decides to attack. It has also made me realize how easy it would be for a criminal to enter a non-secured location with a gun, because a decal won't stop someone who doesn't care about breaking laws.

Since I started carrying a loaded gun, I've taken, so far, 3 additional classes to develop my skill with firearms. Each class I've taken was taught by a professional who also trains law enforcement officers. Since we live in the country and can shoot on our property, I also do some target practicing there. Most concealed carry holders I know pay fees to shoot at a gun range, in order to keep and hone their skills. Carrying a loaded gun is a right and a responsibility. I believe people who go through the expense and hassle of getting their concealed carry license do not take that responsibility lightly. This also has opened my eyes to the fact that the safest place for a loaded gun to be is in a holster worn by someone whose objective is to protect lives. The best way to avoid a negligent discharge is to keep a firearm holstered until it is needed, instead of taking it off & on, which is what we have to do to when a place is off-limits.

I never like having to lock my gun up in my car. There is an increased chance a criminal could steal it if I leave it in my car rather than carry it with me. If I leave it at home, I won't have it for the trip there or back, or for any other errands while I'm out. If it's at home or in the car, it won't be handy if I need it, and then what would I do if I was attacked walking to or from my car or while inside the building? If there aren't TSA-type checkpoints at every entrance, there is nothing stopping anyone from bringing in a weapon. But I don't want to live in a police state with security checkpoints all over the place. Because no matter how difficult we make it for criminals, the saying "Where there's a will, there's a way" is true. We can't un-invent guns; they are here to stay. All we can do is to make sure that the good guys are better armed than the bad guys.

I believe that anyone like myself, who has gone through the effort and expense to get a concealed carry license, should not have to lock up our guns when we enter a government building that our tax dollars have paid for, just to follow the law. If it is important that no firearms be allowed inside, there should not only be a metal detector with armed guards. There should be a private area where we can disarm out of view of the general public, and lock boxes where we can safely store our firearms while inside the building. Even that is less than ideal, as criminals have been known to target and kill security guards, but it is better than the current situation. Because even if the building is secured, I've still got to walk to and from my car, and I'd rather not take my chances unarmed.

In fact, just this last week, there were several car break-ins in the Sedgwick County parking garage in Wichita. I sincerely hope that the criminal who broke into those cars weren't able to steal a gun from a legal gun owner who locked their firearm in their car, just because it isn't lawful to bring it inside. I'm also hoping the same thing doesn't happen to me today.

I am not a lawyer, so I haven't examined this bill with a fine tooth comb. But anything we can do to reduce the infringements on our rights granted by the Constitution, I think we should. My ancestors, who fought against a tyrannical government, would be sad to see how easily we've given up the freedoms that cost them dearly. May we regain our freedoms before it is too late! Thank you.