

House of Representatives of the State of Kansas
Federal and State Affairs Committee
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, Kansas 66612

6 March 2017

Re: Strong Recommendation for rejection of HB 2220 & request to deliver oral testimony 8 March

Committee Members:

I hereby respectfully request time to deliver oral testimony on HB 2220 and very much appreciate your considering this written testimony recommending rejection of HB 2220.

Once again it is obvious that the gun lobby is hard at work through its proxies generating safety problems where there were none before, forcing down unfunded mandates and directly countermanding the will and example of our Founding Fathers.

We are sure that all readers of this document will agree that there are no better interpreters of our 2nd Amendment than the individuals who wrote it. Indeed, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison were the two chief architects of the 2nd Amendment. On the 4th of October 1824, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson were members of the Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia (equivalent to our Kansas Board of Regents). The six-man Board issued very clear rules against keeping and using weapons or arms of any kind anywhere on campus or in its environs.

No Student shall, within the precincts of the University, introduce, keep or use any spirituous or vinous liquors, keep or use weapons or arms of any kind, or gunpowder...

Madison and Jefferson did not assume that the ban alone would suffice, so they also ordered that students who drew lethal weapons were liable for “instant expulsion” from the university.

Students then were trained in the use of firearms; indeed, military drill was mandatory. Even so, they were not permitted to keep their own weapons on campus or in their private dwellings. When they reported for military drill, the students were issued “substitutes in the form of arms,” collected immediately afterwards and kept in locked storage.

James Madison was the primary author of the Constitution, and Thomas Jefferson was the most vigorous defender of individual liberties among the Founding Fathers. They held that prohibiting firearms on university campuses was sensible, Constitutional, and necessary for the proper functioning of the institution itself. Kansas’ gun laws of today, especially KSA 75-7c01 et. seq., flagrantly violate the expressed will and example of our Founding Fathers. HB 2220 takes this violation a step further in that it explicitly strips from knowledgeable local safety experts the ability to enforce safeguards for proper weapon storage, handling and carriage.

While some may assume that having a small army of Clint Eastwood and John Wayne characters prowling the halls of a university is a good thing, this idea is not only counter to our Founding Father’s example, it’s downright dangerous.

Because major universities have become Industrial Research Facilities, there are hundreds of labs across Kansas with explosive materials like those found in my lab, including: nitromethane, methanol, butane, propane, acetylene, rocket fuel, jet fuel, aviation gasoline and lithium thionyl chloride. What you may not know is that major institutions also have even more dangerous materials like tens of thousands of gallons of poisonous, carcinogenic flammables often stored right in the middle of campus. The Hollywood-induced delusion that a shootout between “good guys” and “bad guys” will protect students is crazy. A single gunshot through a flammables cabinet on many campuses could induce a Bhopal like kill zone.

Given the reality of modern research universities today, the wording of HB 2220 is exceedingly dangerous in that it appears to strip from campus safety officials and law enforcement the ability to prescribe and enforce proper carriage, transportation and gun storage. HB 2220 appears to take away from university Airport Managers the ability to simply demand that guns and ammunition be stowed and carried in flight-safe cases when loaded on aircraft. HB 2220 appears to strip from the Fire Marshall the ability to demand appropriate storage of ammunition so as not to generate a fire and explosion hazard. It even strips from medical professionals the ability to preclude firearms from high magnetic field areas. In short, HB 2220 is the most obvious indication that Topeka’s “wheels have come off.”

Although many may think it just fine to push a given political ideology, no matter what the consequences, sadly, this Legislature’s current fascination with nonsensical gun laws are generating real, adverse effects across the state which will get worse. Among the most damning is the fact that at least one foreign nation has issued travel warnings for their students and scholars considering coming to Kansas. As more follow suit, the travel warnings are bound to expand beyond scholars to their traveling public and corporate entities. With laws like this Kansas runs the risk of being labeled as an out-of-control, lawless frontier where foreigners, foreign investment and foreign companies are not only not welcome, but their staff would be at physical risk if they would come.

So as a gun specialist, long-time defense technologist and member of a military and law-enforcement family, I certainly support the 2nd Amendment’s provision that members of a well-regulated militia be allowed to bear arms. With that said, I also see very serious problems with the current guns on campus laws and HB 2220. Sadly, it has generated some unforeseen consequences that are damaging and will continue to damage the industries, investments and youth of the state. Accordingly, we very strongly urge you to adopt HB 2074 and reject HB 2220.

Respectfully,



Dr. Ron Barrett-Gonzalez

Chapter President University of Kansas Chapter of the American Association of University Professors
and
Spokesperson for the State of Kansas Conference of the American Association of University Professors

RMB:pdq