

Senate Committee on Ways and Means

Testimony by Forrest Knox in OPPOSITION to **SB 235**

Prohibiting the carrying of concealed weapons in certain buildings.

23 March 2017

Chairman McGinn and Committee Members:

(As this hearing was scheduled so quickly, in a committee that normally doesn't hear gun bills (the intent is very clear), I have submitted this testimony directly to members via email. I would also like it to be in the committee record. Do you distrust Kansas citizens?)

Are guns banned today in Kansas mental hospitals, or in our local hospitals? Are guns banned at Kansas universities and community colleges today? That depends on what you mean by "banned."

If you mean, "Are there signs on the buildings saying no guns?", then the answer is YES, there are signs saying "NO GUNS" on many of these buildings.

If you mean, "Is there security in place to actually ensure that guns are not carried into these buildings", then the answer is NO. Anyone can carry a gun into the building, into a mental hospital, or a local hospital, or into campus buildings. There is nothing to stop them. Any criminal, any person with evil intent, can walk straight into any of these buildings with a gun.

A sign is not security! There are no real protections in place for the public, for patients, for workers, for students or teachers, in these buildings. The fact is that signs, in the absence of adequate security, actually make us less secure.

Which guns do these signs keep out? Only those guns in the hands of law-abiding citizens. This makes such "Gun Free Zones" even more attractive to criminals.

The issue here seems to be more about feelings than about the facts. Some people "feel" more secure seeing the "NO GUN" sign on the doors. But the facts tell a different story. In fact, it is only the criminals who are more secure in these buildings, able to carry out their intentions without resistance.

However, some people, including some public officials, and apparently, the media, are truly more afraid of law-abiding citizens with guns, than of armed criminals. These people believe the signs keep us safer because they don't trust law-abiding citizens. Facts do not justify this position.

The number of guns in the hands of law-abiding citizens today is much higher than it has ever been, and crime is down significantly, not up. All 50 states now allow some form of the concealed carry of a firearm.

Presently, two thirds of states allow for campus carry, with 9 states mandating that it be permitted. Campus carry has existed in the nation for over 20 years, with multiple campuses allowing it for the last 10 years. Hundreds of campuses now permit concealed carry, with more states mandating it each year, and with no trend of increased accidents, crime, or suicides. Curiously, past campus mass shootings have occurred in "Gun Free Zones."

In a study of major universities across the nation, the Harvard School of Public Health found that 6.4% of male students and 1.5% of female students reported having a working firearm at college, and this was in the 90's, before legal campus carry. At that time, Violence on Campus reported that from 6% to 7% of students carried some form of a weapon on campus. Campus crime is such that the vast majority of these weapons are carried for self-protection.

Today in Kansas, government trusts its citizens. Current law in Kansas upholds both the state and the federal constitutions and doesn't infringe on a citizen's right to carry a weapon for the defense of our persons, families, and fellow citizens.

Those who fear law-abiding citizens like to talk about the "What ifs." What if someone gets mad? What if someone drops their gun? What if it accidentally goes off? They would like to take away our personal responsibility and freedoms because of imaginary scenarios that have proven to be statistically irrelevant. The problem of crime is not solved by taking the weapons away from law-abiding citizens.

With the 2013 change in law, a temporary four-year exemption period was allowed for buildings to figure out where security was needed, and where citizens should be allowed to provide for their own security. This exemption ends June 30, 2017. With this date soon approaching, suddenly there is a "crisis." The truth is that most public buildings just took down their "no gun" signs four years ago, and it has been a non-issue. Kansas citizens can be trusted!

Kansas law already includes a permanent exemption to this law. In public areas of public buildings law-abiding citizens can be kept from having a means to self-defense only if the facility provides for the safety of the occupants. Public buildings can ban guns as long as they ban ALL guns. Sounds reasonable to me. Let's keep our Kansas freedoms!