
LOUDER: No place for guns on campuses

Justin Louder

Saturday, May 30, 2009

SAN ANGELO, Texas — The Texas Senate recently passed SB1146, a bill that would allow concealed handguns on Texas college campuses. The bill calls for anyone over age 21 who has a valid concealed handgun permit to be allowed to possess the handgun on a campus. I applaud Sen. Robert Duncan, San Angelo's senator, for voting against it.

According to Students for Gun Free Schools, a 2001 study by the U.S. Department of Education found that the overall homicide rate at postsecondary education institutions was 0.07 per 100,000 of enrollment in 1999. By comparison, the criminal homicide rate in the United States was 5.7 per 100,000 persons overall in 1999, and 14.1 per 100,000 for persons ages 17 to 29.

Another study, conducted by the Department of Justice, found that 93 percent of violent crimes that victimize college students occur off campus. This research demonstrates conclusively that students on the campuses of postsecondary institutions are significantly safer than both their off-campus counterparts and the nation as a whole.

Sen. Jeff Wentworth, the bill's author, has said that it would allow Texas students protection against mass shootings such as those at Virginia Tech. But if college students were able to carry a concealed weapon, would that make the campus safer? Can you definitively say that if handguns were allowed at Virginia Tech that the massacre would have been averted?

Or would the possibility arise for more injuries or deaths caused by multiple students trying to stop the shooter, each with his own handgun?

Institutions of higher education are places for learning and interaction with a diverse group of people (with various religious, political and cultural beliefs). Many college students are living away from home for the first time and are under tremendous pressure to "make it." They are placed in new social situations and are relatively new to life as an adult and away from Mom and Dad.

Students should worry about grades, making it to class on time and getting the most out of their experience, not whether the person sitting next to them in class is carrying a handgun.

I know that some people support this legislation on constitutional grounds in support of the Second Amendment right to bear arms. The silent majority, including parents, grandparents and other relatives of students, will view this action as jeopardizing their family members. I think that allowing concealed handguns on campus would just open the door for more violence against students, faculty and staff on campus.

Instead of focusing on handguns on campus, the Legislature should focus on making higher education available to all Texans. Focus on tuition, focus on financial aid, focus on improving K-12 education, focus on the future and educating that future.

San Angeloan Justin Louder is a doctoral student at Texas Tech University.



© 2012 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online