

Guns on campus

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Would you want your son or daughter to go to a college where it is legal to possess a loaded gun in a dorm room? If not, you may want to think twice about sending your child to school in Texas.

A bill under consideration in the state Senate, [S. B. 182](#), would require all public colleges and universities to allow holders of a concealed handgun license to carry loaded weapons on campus.

The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators has registered its [opposition](#) to legalizing concealed carry on campus. So have national associations of student affairs administrators, campus housing officers [and so on](#). But if S. B. 182 passes, all public colleges and universities in Texas will have to allow CHL holders to carry loaded guns. Even in dorms.

When Texas state senator Brian Birdwell filed the bill in January—a month after the Sandy Hook tragedy—he issued a [press release](#) probably intended to soothe parents' worries. It asserted that schools would still be able to “establish rules and regulations governing the storage of handguns in dorms.” But that’s only reassuring if you don’t read too closely: those rules and regulations can cover only storage, not carrying. And besides, a mere violation of campus regulations wouldn’t result in a felony conviction, as carrying a loaded gun on campus can now.

Since the 2007 mass shooting at Virginia Tech, legislators in [many states](#) have introduced bills to expand concealed carry to college campuses—18 in 2011 alone (they passed in Mississippi and Wisconsin), 16 more in 2012. What’s next in Texas?

Professors at Baylor University are at the center of a fight to keep S. B. 182 from becoming law. Even though the proposed law wouldn’t force private universities like Baylor to allow concealed carry, it would decriminalize the practice. And the Baylor professors are standing in solidarity with their colleagues at public institutions that would be barred from opting out.

In February, the professors [delivered a petition](#) to Senator Birdwell's office. To date 170 Baylor faculty and staff have signed. A Baylor professor I know says he plans to testify at hearings on a companion bill in the Texas House ([H. B. 972](#)), hearings inconveniently scheduled for March 14, during spring break for both Baylor and the University of Texas in Austin, the state's capital.

In 2011, a similar bill failed to come to a vote after the Baylor professors rallied colleagues in opposition. It's hard to say what will happen this time around in Texas—or with bills pending or soon to be introduced in other states, all part of the relentless push to introduce loaded handguns onto the campuses of colleges and universities nationwide.