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OPINION

Clay Reynolds: Campus Carry offers no benefit while increasing risks





(Dean Rohrer - NewsArt.com)

By [dallasnews Administrator](#)

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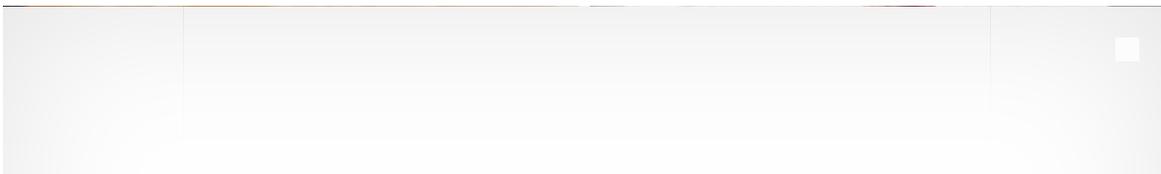
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This past summer, I did something I opposed doing in principle: I took a course to obtain a concealed handgun license.

Full disclosure: I do and mostly always have owned a firearm. I have never and seriously doubt that I will ever find any reason to carry a firearm on my person. I will, though, now be obliged to carry my CHL identification card with me. But I am not obliged to carry a gun.

My motivation for taking the course was the passage of Texas Senate Bill 11, which will allow CHL holders to bring firearms onto a Texas state university campus as of Aug. 1. I wanted to find out what was involved in becoming a licensed handgun carrier. The answer: Not much.

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The course I signed up for, sharply discounted by Groupon, was conducted by a Texas DPS- and the NRA-licensed instructor. It was held at an upscale public firing range in a Dallas suburb. Each class lasts six hours, reduced from the original requirement of 12. This, plus the one hour allotted for range qualification — conducted separately — is all that’s required.

Simply put, a driver’s license is harder to get.

As Texas joins the 38 states that now have some kind of law permitting campus carry, universities are scrambling to come up with restrictions governing the possession of firearms on their premises. University presidents are conferring about potential policies, and faculty, staff and students are all loudly voicing opinions. I have been surprised by the amount of misinformation surrounding the issue. Many believe, for example, that the “open carry” proviso will extend to the campuses as well.



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Some individuals worry about intimidating confrontations with angry and visibly armed students who might resort to gun violence out of emotional distress. Many

faculty demanded the right to have their classrooms and/or offices declared gun-free zones, and nearly as many insisted that a CHL holder would be welcome as a kind of vigilante deterrent to violent crime.

In fact, firearms brought to campus must be concealed. Further, under the present law, a licensed carrier *already* may bring a firearm into the parking lot and onto sidewalks adjacent to and around a campus, just not into the campus "premises," defined mostly as enclosed buildings. Other exclusions include university hospitals and clinics, and any structure housing an NCAA-sponsored event.

The core issue, though, is that the present number of firearms that may *illegally* be on a state university campus, whatever it may be, will be increased by whatever number of firearms will *legally* be on the campus after Aug. 1.

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It would just make sense that if one puts more dangerous objects into an environment, then the chance of misuse of those objects will be more likely. More guns equals more potential for problems.

I, personally, am not comfortable with the idea that colleagues or students might be walking around "locked and loaded," whether they are disgruntled and seeking redress or they are on the lookout for potential bad guys. There's enough emotional and psychological stress associated with higher education without adding a handy

tool for violence to the mix.

At the same time, I recognize that there is presently no law or regulation that will prevent any individual, licensed or not, from bringing a firearm to a campus and using it. Even when the law is passed, nothing will prevent a licensed carrier from illegally transporting a gun into a restricted area; but nothing prevents an *unlicensed* carrier from illegally doing so now.

Campus carry, then, is no worse than concealed carry; both are worse than open carry, which is already in force. The larger questions concern how easily a permit can be obtained and how available handguns are to almost any gomer with cold cash and a clean record.

After taking the CHL course and studying the arguments surrounding this issue, though, I was sustained in my belief that the licensed carrying of firearms by anyone who qualifies under the minimum requirements is a terrible idea. But I don't think the new law will make any difference in relative campus safety. Expanding the extant gun laws to take in university campuses will probably have no effect on the potential for tragic outcomes in a society that accepts gun violence as way of life.

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