

TO THE PROBLEM OF CONCEALED WEAPONS ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

An increased number of campus shootings in the last few decades has brought the public's attention to the question of safety of students on campuses, and, more specifically, policies of education facilities regarding weapons. The debate on whether to allow students and college employees to carry concealed guns on high education campuses remains a relevant and controversial topic to this day.

This topic is especially relevant in the United States of America, since this is one of few developed countries where it is permissible for civilians to own weapons. At the same time, America has experienced a rise in mass shootings during the last 30 years, a considerable portion of which occurred on the grounds of university campuses.

There are many strong arguments presented both for and against carrying weapons on campus. Supporters of conceal and carry laws state that "allowing faculty, staff, and students to carry guns on campus will act as a deterrent and a means for protection of them and their fellow classmates". Their arguments are driven by concerns for the safety of students and faculty staff as well as the individual right to self-defense of every USA citizen. Opponents of such policies, however, argue that the presence of weapons on college grounds would be useless as a safety measure. Additionally, it would create an unsafe environment for students during classes. At this point in time, enough data about firearm-related violence has been collected over the recent years, and it is now clear that students should not be allowed to conceal and carry on campus.

The first problem that supporters of conceal and carry legislature address is the ability of college employees to defend themselves and their classmates and colleagues against a perpetrator. Many argue that having a gun during an assault can also increase the chances of neutralizing the shooter before they can kill or injure more people. Another issue that proponents of guns point out is that the ability of students to carry concealed weapons is a manifestation of their right to defend themselves granted to them by the Second Amendment.

To begin with, when real-life cases of firearm-related violence are examined, it becomes clear that guns play an insignificant role in self-defense. According to data from the National Crime Victimization Surveys, victims of crime incidents manage to attack or threaten their offender with a gun in less than one percent of cases. It is explained by the fact that in real-life situations, people don't always

have enough time to react and draw a gun. As evidenced by the case of the Umpqua Community College shooting, armed students are reluctant to engage in a direct conflict with a shooter, fearing that they might be mistaken for the perpetrator. These findings suggest that allowing guns on campus is not an effective way of ensuring safety of college employees.

Secondly, as Smith points out, "the Second Amendment is a very simple law when read, but has proven to be a much more complex issue when lines are drawn". There is an important distinction between the right to own a weapon and being able to carry it at any given location. In addition, it is important to remember that higher education facilities are mainly populated by teens and young adults who tend to exhibit riskier behaviors than an average person. So, the possibility of having firearms on campus is connected to increased risks of gun-related incidents. Such circumstances, in a way, separate colleges and universities from the rest of society and require a more careful approach to conceal and carry policies.

In conclusion, it is sufficient to say that the question of concealed weapons on campus cannot be easily solved and still remains a subject for discourse among policymakers. Yet the existing research on the use of firearms and past cases of college shootings suggest that students and college employees should not be allowed to carry concealed weapons on campus.