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York County leaders tout new law to allow guns in bars

BY JIE JENNY ZOU

jzou@heraldonline.com February 1, 2014



Local legislators who favor allowing people with concealed weapons permits to carry guns into restaurants and bars say the law would not create a danger because it applies to law-abiding citizens.

The state General Assembly last month passed a law that allows anyone with a concealed weapons permit to carry firearms into restaurants and bars. Establishments have the right to forbid weapons by posting signs. Also, any permit holder with a gun would not be allowed to drink alcohol in an establishment.

The bill has been sent to Gov. Nikki Haley, who has indicated she will sign it.

"It's a very good bill," said State Rep. Ralph Norman, R-Rock Hill. "It ought to be a welcome relief."

Norman said the legislation applies only to law-abiding citizens, not to the criminals who already illegally bring firearms into businesses.

State Rep. Gary Simrill, a Rock Hill Republican, agreed with Norman. He called the law a "streamlining" measure that would remove "encumbrances" from those certified to carry concealed firearms.

The State Law Enforcement Division says the state had more than 229,000 active permits at the end of 2013.

"I want to see more streamlining," Simrill said. "I think it's important not only that we respect the Second Amendment, but in these instances, we don't stymie those law-abiding citizens who have gone through the process."

Simrill said he has a concealed weapons permit, and he carries his Smith & Wesson Bodyguard 380 semi-automatic "half the time." Under current laws, those carrying concealed weapons secure their firearms in a locked compartment in a vehicle before entering a bar or restaurant that serves alcohol, regardless of their intention to drink.



Hailey Carber, right, waits on a table at the Towne Tavern at Fort Mill Thursday. Owner Daniel Holmes described his restaurant as being all about "family, family, family." **ANDY BURRISS** — aburris@heraldonline.com | Buy Photo

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"We're talking about people who have passed a background check," said Simrill of permit holders. "I see it as not a dangerous move at all."

Customer Safety and Self-Policing

But the owner of two local eateries said he opposes the law. Daniel Holmes, owner of Towne Tavern in Fort Mill and Wings University in Rock Hill, said the bill is the "most ridiculous thing" he's heard.

Holmes referred to a recent incident in Tampa, Fla., where a retired police officer shot and killed a fellow moviegoer in a theater after a confrontation over texting.

"You're just going to waltz into my restaurant with a gun on your hip?" said Holmes. "We're going to have to police this."

The owner plans to post signs on the doors of both his establishments that read: "No conceivable weapons allowed."

State Sen. Wes Hayes, R-Rock Hill, said he thinks the bill applies "adequate safeguards" to a population that already follows the rules. He also noted that penalties for violating the bill, which could include fines, jail time, and permit revocation, are stiff deterrents.

Mark Bollinger of the Rock Hill Police Department said the department has yet to officially study the proposal, but he said the "impetus" will be placed on businesses.

"They're going to have to eyeball people and then call us," said Bollinger. "It's not like we can go in frisking everybody."

York County Sheriff Bruce Bryant wrote in a statement that enforcement likely will not change based on the law aside from charging those who illegally carry firearms into businesses with opt-out signs.

"Obviously, weapons and alcohol together can cause concern," wrote Bryant. "However, from a law enforcement perspective, we have far more people killed by drunk drivers leaving these establishments than we do people killed in gun fights by CWP holders."

Norman predicts that most businesses will not opt-out. "Why would I go to the effort to ... say everybody's welcome except anybody who carries a gun?" he said. "As an owner it could deter business."

For Holmes, who described his restaurants as being all about "family, family, family," the proposed law is about keeping his clientele as well as his staffs, which include teens, safe. "Is my staff not as important as airport people?" he asked.

Two other Rock Hill eateries that serve alcohol declined to be interviewed for the story, but both said they planned to use the signs to opt out of the law.

Mike Thar, general manager of Millstone Pizza and Taphouse in downtown Rock Hill, said that the issue has come up at several management meetings, but the business is holding off on a decision until the bill officially becomes law and staff members have consulted with the eatery's owners.

"Guest safety, that comes first no matter what," said Thar. "From there we'll evaluate the law and decide what to do."

Jie Jenny Zou • 803-329-4062



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Mitch Combs · Owner at 1st Defense

I liked Wings U as well. We frequented the place but not anymore. Not after this stance.

Reply · 9 · Like · February 2 at 5:47am



Tove King Nestor · Rock Hill, South Carolina

the bad apples have ruined it for the rest of us. shame

Reply · 1 · Like · February 2 at 6:15am



Ronnie Taylor · York Comprehensive High School

Tove King Nestor At least the criminals will know where the gun free zones are

Reply · 2 · Like · February 2 at 9:59am



Allan Kidd · York, South Carolina

I kinda liked Wings U but if they post a sign they won't get a dime whether I'm carrying or not. Anc money there.

Reply · 7 · Like · February 1 at 8:46pm



Jim McBurnett

It is time to print the business cards that say I will no longer come to your business since droves minds may change.....

Reply · 3 · Like · February 2 at 6:07am



Jim McBurnett

<http://www.persecusa.com/html/free/freestuff-merchantcards.htm>

Reply · Like · February 2 at 9:24am



Patrick M. White · Fort Mill, South Carolina

I find it odd that the legislature has no problems passing a law that allows all of us law abiding, back else's private establishment, but they have not passed a law to allow me to carry into the place whc good man, he runs a good place, and since it is his private property he can make whatever decision that law passed.

Reply · 5 · Like · February 2 at 6:33am



Mike Autry · Lancaster, South Carolina

I can see a lot of difficulty ahead administering this law. Glad businesses can still prohibit C combination. Going to be like the old west again. Maybe they can check their holsters at

Reply · 1 · Like · February 2 at 8:38am



David Mc Hopalong

Agree Patrick. And I have no problem with business banning CWP. I just don't use them.

Reply · 4 · Like · February 2 at 8:54am



Stacey Blaine Kuhn · University of South Carolina

Since my son works there I for one do not want him or any other teen asking people if t

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Phase Splitter · Top Commenter

Any one that thinks that criminals don't already carry concealed guns in bars, stores, banks, ect are l

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John Westbrook · York Technical College

2 more restaurants that wont be getting any of my money.

Reply · 4 · Like · February 1 at 7:09pm



Joe Ramirez · Defiance High School

Now I know what two establishments not to go to.

Reply · 3 · Like · February 1 at 7:44pm



Jimmy Honeycutt · Rock Hill, South Carolina

What is the difference in having a concealed weapon in a grocery store and having one in a restaura decisions. Just because law abiding citizens with a concealed weapon are around alcohol doesn't me days. Come on people wake up!!

Reply · 1 · Like · February 2 at 6:22am



Teresa Smith

Drunks make bad decisions. I'm all for concealed weapons, I date a cop, my girls will get (person everywhere we go, but drunks in bars make bad decisions. Its different when you weapon, by then someone has tried to calm the situation, but if that gun is in your hand

innocent people that may get hurt, I think the safety with this situation, is relying on the armed when they are requesting to be served alcohol. This will also put more responsibility request from armed patrons. I wouldn't want to tell a man with a gun he couldn't have a see how this plays out.

Reply ·  2 · Like · February 2 at 6:40am



Edward T. Egan ·  Top Commenter · Regis High School

Teresa Smith, if your cop boyfriend carries everywhere you go when off-duty, how does who's legally carrying? At any time (theoretically at least) he could be a drunk in a bar also backgrounds than an off-duty cop.

The burden will be on the CWP holder to not enter an establishment while carrying, if it be on the CWP holder to not drink if he/she is in a place that serves.

I don't drink, but I do carry. Once the law is passed, on principle I will not patronize any

Reply ·  3 · Like · February 2 at 12:38pm



Terry James

Why not just put a sign that welcomes robbers and others of their ilk to let them know they will no person with a gun? It would help someone to choose the location(s) to carry out their crime.....

Reply ·  1 · Like · February 2 at 7:25am



John Westbrook · York Technical College

funny how liberals think the cwp holders are incapable of obeying the law , by not drinking while car guns in the car because of a sign.

Reply ·  1 · Like · February 2 at 10:19am



Marisol Amaya ·  Top Commenter

Anyone who thinks someone in a bar isn't going to drink is naïve. I think it will take what goes on in Texas.) for people to understand that booze and guns don't mix. But then again, many here don't care more. When you have country singer Toby Keith afraid to allow guns in his restaurant/bar, that's real

Reply · Like · February 2 at 7:13am



Allan Kidd · York, South Carolina

About 45 states allow guns in restaurants that sell alcohol. If it was as big a problem as you drink while carrying regardless of where you are.

Reply · Like · February 2 at 8:54am



Marisol Amaya ·  Top Commenter

Wrong. Only 4 states allow guns in bars. The most extreme states only. Only 18 states allow business except bars. It being illegal did not stop all the boozed up shootings in each of

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/04/us/04guns.htm?_r=0

Tennessee is one of four states, along with Arizona, Georgia and Virginia, that recently ended other states allow weapons in restaurants that serve alcohol.)

Reply · Like · February 2 at 9:19am



Marisol Amaya ·  Top Commenter

This is just Texas and it's only a few of many. Each state has link after link after link of bar

Army veteran shot at bar dies in mother's arms

<http://www.khou.com/news/local/Man-dies-after-being-shot-driving-several-miles-from-bar>

Country singer Wayne Mills dies after bar shooting

<http://www.today.com/entertainment/country-singer-wayne-mills-dies-after-bar-shooting>

Two men found shot to death inside bar in east Harris County

<http://abclocal.go.com/ktrk/story?section=news%2Flocal&id=9216210>

Victim of Sunday morning bar shooting in critical condition

<http://www.kltv.com/story/24232349/victim-of-sunday-morning-bar-shooting-in-critical-co>

1 killed in N. Houston sports bar shooting... See More

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