

February 3, 2012

Dear Honorable Members of the Legislature:

We wrote a similar letter in February of 2011 and feel that it is important to restate our position on pending legislation, including SB1474, that allow weapons to be carried on University Campuses and removes control of the campuses from the Arizona Board of Regents and University Presidents. We believe that the intent of the proposed legislation may be good but the methodology and reasoning are flawed and passage will cause unintended, yet predictable, consequences that will negatively impact Public Safety and the University communities.

Since the tragic incident at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, Virginia Tech on April 16, 2007, as well as the shooting incidents at Northern Illinois University on February 14, 2008, and the University of Alabama at Huntsville on February 12, 2010, personnel at colleges and universities across the country continue to review, update, and test emergency plans to deal with these and other types of violent situations. These tragic incidents continue to occur at shopping malls, government facilities, fast food restaurants, churches, parking lots and housing complexes. These are unpredictable incidents. There is no preparation that can prevent these types of situations from occurring.

In an active shooter situation, the primary objective of law enforcement is to neutralize the threat as quickly as possible. Currently, officers working at our universities know that when they respond to an active shooter situation, most likely the person with a weapon will be an adversary. They also know that there will be noise, confusion, carnage and chaos. During all this, they must still ensure that they have the correct target before engaging with deadly force. Incorrect target identification will result in innocent individuals killed or seriously injured. Additional people with weapons will delay law enforcement from reaching the active shooter and increase the potential of more victims.

Training is critical in the response to active shooter situations or any other situation that may result in the use of deadly force. Our police officers attend an 18 week course at an accredited Law Enforcement Academy and participate in an 18 week field training program upon completion of academy training with their respective agency. Approximately 70 hours of the academy is dedicated to firearms training, both on the range and in the classroom.

Arizona Peace Officers Standards Training Board requires officers to qualify a minimum of once a year with all firearms carried for law enforcement purposes. Our officers train an average of four times a year. During the training, Firearm Instructors attempt to create situations in environments that will increase the heart rate and the release of adrenaline. Police officers also train in their duty gear, including body armor. Police officers carry additional ammunition as part of their equipment and many are now equipped with patrol rifles as additional equipment to deal with these tragic incidents.

ARS §13-3112 identifies acceptable training for the purposes of obtaining a Concealed Weapon Permit. Once obtained, the permit is valid for a period of five years. Renewal can be accomplished without any additional training. Some of the acceptable training is: completing any hunter education or hunter safety class approved by the Arizona Game and Fish Department or similar agency in another state or an original or copy of a United States Department of Defense form 214 (DD-214) indicating an honorable discharge or general discharge under honorable conditions. There is no time limit as to how long ago the person was discharged from the military and the hunter education/safety classes can be taken on line in conjunction with a field day that includes shooting either a pellet rifle or a 22 caliber rifle. Neither of these trainings ensures that the permit holder has ever fired a handgun or demonstrated any proficiency with the weapon they intend to carry concealed.

This training may be adequate for personal protection or hunter safety. However, continuous and more extensive training is necessary to deal with an unpredictable active shooter situation on our university campuses.

A large portion of the crimes committed at our universities are thefts or crimes of opportunity. Most of the items taken are left unattended or are not adequately secured. Security and weapons storage in University buildings and residential hall facilities in particular will be very challenging. Improper storage makes the weapon accessible to roommates, suitemates or almost anyone who enters the facility. Weapons in the hands of unauthorized individuals increase the potential for the loss of life or serious injury to others. Many of the theft cases we investigate involve items being stolen from unattended backpacks, purses, or in unlocked desk drawers or offices.

Any report of a weapon being seen on campus will continue to activate a full response by law enforcement. Increasing the number of weapons on campus, with no requirement that they be well concealed, will increase the number of reports of weapons sightings. This will cause unnecessary disruption of classes and increase the anxiety level of students.

Additionally, the use of alcohol and drugs continue to be major challenges at our universities in Arizona and across the nation. Comprehensive reports released by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's (NIAAA's) Task Force support this observation. The central report, *A Call to Action; Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges* indicates that annually 1,825 students between the ages of 18-24 die from alcohol related unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle crashes (*Hingson et al., 2009*). In addition, it is estimated that each year, more than 696,000 students between the ages of 18-24 are assaulted by another student who has been drinking (*Hingson et al., 2009*) and more than 97,000 students between the ages of 18-24 are victims of alcohol-related sexual assaults or date rape. Allowing weapons in an environment with individuals exhibiting high risk behavior is not a good mixture. It would seem prudent to focus efforts on this at risk behavior.

Despite recent high profile shootings on college campuses, the evidence shows that college campuses are safe environments for students.

A recent U.S. Department of Justice Study comparing the violent victimization of college students versus non-students, aged 18-24, from the period 1995-2002 found that students experience less violence annually than non-students. Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, *National Crime Victimization Survey – Violent Victimization of College Students, 1995-2002 1* (Jan. 2005), at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/vvcs02.pdf>.

Approximately 9 out of 10 college students who were victims of violent crime were victimized off campus, rather than on campus. Firearms were used in only 9% of all violent crimes against college students over this period. (IACLEA, 2008)

Another study similarly discovered that college student gun owners are more likely than those who do not own guns to engage in activities that put themselves and others at risk for severe or life-threatening injuries, including reckless behavior involving alcohol, driving while intoxicated, and suffering an alcohol-related injury. Matthew Miller, David Hemenway & Henry Wechsler, *Guns at College*, 48 J. Am. C. Health 7, 9 (1999).

According to the International Association of campus Law Enforcement Administrators, (IACLEA), "Statement on Concealed Carrying of Firearms Proposals on College Campuses", the unintended consequences of legislation to allow individuals to carry concealed weapons on campus include:

1. Likely increase in both intentional homicides and suicides
2. Increased exposure of campus police to injuries
3. Unfunded mandates resulting from policy changes, including resources necessary to investigate firearms incidents, thefts of firearms, and checking for underage/prohibited possessors
4. Impact on university policies regarding employee concealed carry

IACLEA membership represents more than 1,200 colleges and universities in 20 countries. In addition to the colleges and universities, which are institutional members, IACLEA has 2,000 individual memberships held by campus law enforcement staff, criminal justice faculty members, and municipal chiefs of police.

We are concerned about the tragic shootings and other unpredictable incidents occurring on college campuses across the country. Further research and discussion by stakeholders, including mental health experts, may present more viable options to improve the safety and security of our campuses other than the proposed legislation.

We believe that well-equipped and well-trained law enforcement professionals, utilizing modern technology are better prepared to handle violent and unpredictable situations in our university communities and that restricting guns on campus is a more effective strategy for creating a safe community than the strategy of allowing more guns on campuses.

Law enforcement intervention should be done by law enforcement personnel who have been specifically selected and trained to perform these duties, not by individuals who may have marginally completed an 8 hour non-comprehensive course years ago or other marginal training or training equivalency and possibly have not practiced with the firearm they are now carrying.

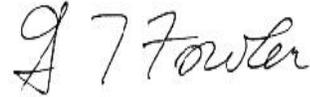
With respect and regards,



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