

CAMPUS CARRY LEGISLATION AND ITS IMPACT AT TEXAS STATE
UNIVERSITY

by

Colin James Walt

HONORS THESIS

Submitted to Texas State University
in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
graduation in the Honors College
December 2020

Thesis Supervisor:

Cynthia Opheim

Second Reader:

Tracey Parker

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December 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Cynthia Opheim, who served as my supervisor and mentor throughout my entire thesis. As I prepare for graduate school, I couldn't have asked for a more insightful and thorough thesis supervisor to help guide me through this learning opportunity and set me up for success. Dr. Opheim was a vital resource to me through every aspect of my research, dedicating her precious spare time to my growth as a student. I wouldn't have been able to present this product without her guidance and wisdom. I would also like to thank Dr. Tracey Parker for her efforts in helping me revise my final product and improve my writing skills. To all my professors at Texas State University, I will be eternally grateful for your diligent guidance over the last two years. Each one of you had a profound impact on my academic success. Lastly, I would like to thank my wonderful wife for her constant support during my time in academia.

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ABSTRACT

Texas State University is currently one of many institutions of higher education in Texas that has implemented policies in conjunction with campus carry legislation. Senate Bill 11, often referred to as campus carry, took effect on August 1, 2016. The law allows properly licensed citizens to carry concealed handheld firearms while on campus. In response, Texas State University formed a task force that led the implementation of the law on campus. The purpose of this study is to examine the history and context of campus carry, detail its stipulations, and analyze the impact it's had on students and faculty at Texas State University. Research was conducted utilizing a systematic interview process in conjunction with academic sources. Interviews of students and faculty members from a variety of departments at Texas State University were conducted virtually following a predetermined line of questioning. These interviews were meant to allow members of the university community to share their thoughts on how effective, or ineffective, they believe campus carry has been at improving campus safety, and how it has impacted their lives while on campus. Analysis of interview responses showed that faculty members are more inclined to believe that allowing concealed firearms on campus would decrease the overall safety. The results also indicated that students tend to be more comfortable with the implementation of campus carry at Texas State University, although students were frequently less aware of campus carry policies as compared to faculty. In addition, concerns ranged from police response times during an active shooting to the danger posed by a student carrying a concealed firearm during intense classroom discussions. However, there are limitations to the findings of this study due to the small sample size, and additional data collection would be necessary to draw finer conclusions.

I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of campus carry legislation in Texas after its implementation in August of 2016 has been largely unexplored. After several years of being in place, there are still questions regarding interpretation of the law, subsequent regulations, and the impact it has had on the members of Texas State University. Understandably, it is hard to measure the value, or harm, a specific piece of legislation has had when there is little data available to be reviewed. The purpose of this study is to examine the context of the campus carry law and its impact specifically at Texas State University. A comprehensive look at this important law and its effects at a specific university should play an important role in the shape of future policy.

Events concerning people with concealed firearms on university campuses have been virtually nonexistent over the past several years. While the number of mass school shootings transpiring throughout the United State has been increasing at an alarming rate, the worst events have largely taken place at kindergarten through 12th grade learning establishments (Melgar, 2019). Due to this, data regarding mass school shootings at institutions of higher education has not always been readily available. The charged atmosphere surrounding campus carry legislation has largely dissipated, however there are still organized groups and impassioned people that remain active in the conversation.

One of the main goals of this thesis is to provide context on both sides of the discussion. The question that is continually being asked is: "Should the carrying of concealed firearms on college campuses remain in effect, or should law-makers revisit the issue and potentially reverse current legislation?" Many people are still unclear as to the extent of campus carry legislation and how it impacts their lives while attending

school. As this study found, some people were not even aware that licensed individuals are allowed to carry concealed firearms on campus. Better understanding will lead to more informed opinions, and expand the conversation in a way that can help address the main concern on everyone's mind; safety within the learning environment.

The goal of this author is not to persuade anyone in either direction, but rather to compile the data needed to potentially highlight some of the fundamental concerns that arose during this study from the Texas State University community. With that being said, taking a neutral stance was necessary during this project. It is only through the conscious effort to hear the voices of opposing views that others might also be willing to listen. Such informed discussions can help provide the answers needed to achieve the ultimate goal of a safe learning environment.

First, this paper will provide a brief history behind the rationale for implementing campus carry legislation, detail the current legislation, and outline the State of Texas requirements for concealed carry. Then, the data collected in this study through systematic interviews will be presented and analyzed to assess the impact, both real and perceived, that campus carry has had at Texas State University following the passing of subsequent university guidelines. Finally, the primary concerns that arose from interviewing members of the Texas State University community will be highlighted and compared to current national discussions.

II. HISTORICAL CAMPUS SHOOTINGS

This section will provide a brief overview to the events that helped persuade lawmakers to enact Senate Bill (S.B.) 11, also known as the campus carry law, in the Texas legislature. A main concern that led to the passing of S.B. 11 was the rise in mass

shootings around the United States. Understanding where and when major events took place and how the conversation has unfolded over time will give context to where members of Texas State University find themselves today.

While it may seem as though mass shootings, specifically those involving schools, have only become prevalent in American society over the last decades, the fact is mass school shootings have taken place since at least the 1960s. Understanding what constitutes a mass shooting is the first step in identifying which events should be taken into consideration. The Gun Violence Archive (GVA) is an independent data collection organization that specializes in recording gun related crime and injury statistics to be used by law enforcement agencies and congressional leaders. The GVA (2020) defines mass shooting as, “the numeric value of four or more shot or killed in a single incident, not including the shooter.” At the time of this writing, this has become the most widely accepted definition.

The amount of media attention that was given to the Columbine high school shooting that took place in Littleton, Colorado in 1999 was unprecedented for the time. The fact that the perpetrators were students at the school they attacked also sent shockwaves throughout the country. Advances in technology allowed Columbine to be one of the first mass school shootings to be publicized on such a large scale, but it was not the first shooting of its kind. As a matter of fact, one of the first recorded mass school shootings took place just up the road from Texas State University in Austin, Texas at the University of Texas back in 1966 (Wallenfeldt, 2016).

The shooter in 1966 was named Charles Whitman, and he was a student at the University of Texas at the time. Whitman was described as a smart young man who

showed promise as a student while at the University of Texas. Prior to attending college, Whitman first joined the Marines in 1959, the year he turned eighteen (Biography Editors, 2014). During his time in the service, he would be selected to participate in a military program that allowed him to attend school while in the Marines. However, due to poor grades, he was recalled to active duty status and forced to leave the University of Texas in February 1963. After being discharged from the service in 1964, he returned to the University of Texas to complete his degree in architectural engineering in 1965 (Biography Editors, 2014).

Whitman began seeking help from medical professionals at the university health clinic for emotional instability and headaches. The headaches would later be attributed to a tumor in his brain that was discovered during his autopsy (Biography Editors, 2014). It is likely that this contributed to the feelings of anger, violent impulses and confusion that Whitman made note of prior to committing the shooting. Whitman was advised to see a psychiatrist on campus for further help due to his mental and emotional status, but he decided against it. It is worth noting that he was also prescribed medications by university doctors, which may have exasperated his symptoms.

On the morning of August 1, 1966, Whitman ascended the University of Texas clock tower dressed as a handyman with a footlocker full of rifles, pistols, and blades (Wallenfeldt, 2016). Having killed his mother and wife the previous night, he waited until just before noon to unleash his violent onslaught on the people surrounding the tower. After an hour and half of raining bullets down on terrified bystanders, Whitman was killed when two policemen and an armed citizen forced their way through his barricade onto the tower's observation deck, surrounded him, and killed him. In all, Whitman killed

14 people that day, not including his wife and mother, and injured another 31 (Wallenfeldt, 2016). It was a mass school shooting spree unlike anything else at the time. Soon after, the Austin Police Department, along with other departments throughout the country, recognized their inability to respond effectively to events such as this. As a result, Special Weapons and Tactics units, also known as SWAT, became more common in law enforcement departments around the nation.

In April, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho, a student at Virginia Tech University, entered a dormitory on campus in the early morning armed with a .22 caliber and 9mm pistols. He began his attack by shooting and killing two individuals in the dormitory before heading back to his own room in an adjacent dormitory (Tikkanen, 2016). While law enforcement was responding to the scene where Cho shot his first victims, he headed to a nearby post office to mail his manifesto to NBC News in New York City. Because campus officials believed the original attack was a domestic homicide, students and faculty located on campus were not notified of the event (Tikkanen, 2016).

Shortly after mailing his manifesto, Cho walked back to campus and entered the Norris Hall building where students and faculty were well into their morning classes. At approximately 9:45 a.m., Cho opened fire on the people located inside the building. The shooting lasted approximately 15 minutes before police were able to enter the building, at which point Cho took his own life, bringing the shooting spree to an end. In total, 33 people were killed, including the shooter, and 17 others were wounded from gunshots, while others were injured in the chaos that ensued after Cho opened fire (Tikkanen, 2016). This shooting was the worst school shooting to date, surpassing the devastation committed by Charles Whitman at the University of Texas in 1966.

After the Virginia Tech shooting, records indicated that Cho had a history of mental illness, dating back to counseling sessions he began in November of 2005. This also included a brief stay at a psychiatric hospital after it was reported by a fellow student that Cho may have been suicidal (Biography Editors, 2014). He would later be diagnosed with a mood disorder and ordered by a court to attend a counseling session at the Virginia Tech Cook Counseling Center (Tikkanen, 2016). After his mandatory counseling session, there are no records to indicate that Cho attended any further treatment during the time leading up to the mass shooting.

While both the mass school shootings at the University of Texas and Virginia Tech played a part in shaping the campus carry debate, the shooting at Virginia Tech was the main catalyst sparking a call for action and subsequent legislation. The shooting is considered to be a cornerstone of the campus carry movement (Weinstein, 2015). It also brought the question of how to most effectively protect schools and university campuses to the forefront of community discussions and politics within the United States. It is frequently referenced by both the opposition and proponents to campus carry. Soon after Virginia Tech, terms like “active shooter” became synonymous with similar events.

Safety is a main concern for any college campus, but there has been little agreement on how to properly achieve it. Some believe that adding more firearms to a campus environment will only exacerbate the current situation and hinder the learning experience. Others believe that allowing citizens to lawfully carry concealed firearms on campus will help to provide additional safety for those carrying the firearms, as well as adding protection for the people around them. Regardless of one’s stance, the events that sparked the debate are significant because they offer real life examples that can be

studied. Informed decisions are required to effectively solve the problem of protecting college campuses.

III. PAST RESPONSES IN LEGISLATION

Before S.B. 11, and other similar bills found in states with campus carry, there were attempts made at creating legislation to address shootings around the country, including those on college campuses. Legislative responses have varied widely throughout the years. Americans live in a very reactive society, where necessary changes are usually addressed in the aftermath of large scale traumatic events. Regulations towards firearms in general have taken center stage at the national level over the past two decades. While campus carry laws are not at the forefront of gun control debates and laws, their stipulations often have an indirect impact on the concealed carrying of firearms in public, including people who wish to carry on college campuses. This section will focus on the NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007 and the Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act of 2013, both of which offer a glimpse into proposed solutions for the rise in shootings, before campus carry became as prevalent as it is today.

In the aftermath of the shooting at the University of Texas in 1966, emphasis was on the ability of law enforcement to react to these types of events, rather than on gun control itself. However, several new measures specifically designed for gun control were proposed in the wake of the 2007 shooting at Virginia Tech. There was also a focus put on mental health and how it relates to those individuals who commit violent shootings, both at schools and in the general public. There are estimations that suggest that nearly 60% of all mass shooters since 1970 have suffered from some form of mental illness

(Metzl & MacLeish, 2015). Mental illness has often played a significant role in trying to explain why people are willing to commit such horrific acts. However, recently there has been a shift of opinion amongst scholars regarding the use of mental illness as the sole explanation for shootings, rather than looking at it as only one possible factor among many (Metzl & MacLeish, 2015). Regardless, mental illness has been a focal point behind the legislation proposed by some politicians, as evidenced by the laws themselves.

Exactly two months to the day following the mass shooting at Virginia Tech, H.R. 2640 - NICS Improvement Amendments Act of 2007 was introduced by Rep. Carolyn McCarthy of New York, and signed into law by President George W. Bush in January of 2008 (110th Congress, 2008). NICS is short for National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which conducts background checks on individuals when they attempt to buy a firearm from a licensed dealer. In order to be a licensed dealer, businesses have to apply for a Federal Firearms License (FFL) through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) (ATF, 2020). FFL dealers will be discussed more in the next section with regards to License to Carry (LTC) individuals and purchasing a firearm.

NICS itself was created by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993. Soon after, the system would be assigned to the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). NICS was established so FFL dealers could conduct background checks at the national level on individuals seeking to purchase a firearm, and to ensure the sale and transfer of firearms is in compliance with federal and state laws (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(g), published prior in 1992, makes it unlawful for certain individuals to ship, transport, or obtain firearms and ammunition (Mueller III, 2020). According to section 922(g), those individuals include “convicted

felons, fugitives from justice, unlawful users or addicts of controlled substances, mental defectives, illegal aliens, dishonorably discharged servicemen, and persons who have renounced their U.S. citizenship” (Mueller II, 2020). At last, there was a piece of legislation that offered more specific legal parameters of what disqualified the lawful owning of firearms, but there were still few systems in place that could be used to identify these individuals. Hence, a year after section 922(g) was published, NICS would be created to serve that purpose. While the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 does not give detailed specifics on the concealed carry of firearms, its subsequent creation of NICS would play a significant role in the future of concealed carry legislation.

H.R 2640 would later take NICS a step further by providing new guidance to other federal agencies on what information relating to the mental health of an individual would be required to be reported to the system and how frequently this reporting had to be done. No less than once a quarter, federal agencies are required to update the status and information they have on individuals who are disqualified from owning a firearm to the Attorney General, all of which is to remain confidential (110th Congress, 2008). Specific guidance on how to ensure the security of the information provided to NICS was given by the Attorney General earlier in October 1998 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). NICS is then updated to allow more accurate information to be used in the selling and purchasing of firearms, with the hopes of keeping firearms out of the hands of those who are deemed at risk of committing violence due to a mental health issue.

The law went on to outline what is required for a person be removed from the disqualified list, such as those individuals who have been rehabilitated, discharged from mandatory treatment, or had their information expunged. It also stipulates that states are

required to provide information on individuals who are “disqualified from possessing or receiving a firearm; convicted of misdemeanor crimes of domestic violence; and adjudicated as mentally defective or committed to mental institutions,” while also being required to remove outdated information (110th Congress, 2008). The goal is to expand the capabilities that NICS offers by having the most accurate information available in an attempt to stop certain people deemed dangerous from purchasing firearms, while also not impeding the rights of lawful Americans. In light of the Virginia Tech mass shooting, the law was considered a step in the right direction as evidenced by its co-sponsorship between Democrats and Republicans.

Later, in April 2013, a bipartisan bill known as S. 649 - Public Safety and Second Amendment Rights Protection Act of 2013 was introduced in the U.S. Senate by West Virginia Democratic Senator Joe Manchin and cosponsored by Pennsylvania Republican Senator Pat Toomey (Manchin, 2013). On the surface, the bill comes across as very bipartisan. It didn't impose any new restrictions on the types of firearms citizens could own, but did expand upon regulations that were already in place. The bill possessed three key features: expanding the existing background system to cover sales that had previously been exempt, encouraged states to provide accurate records to NICS, and established a National Commission on Mass Violence to study causes within the United States.

First, with regards to background checks, it would have expanded the requirement to conduct background checks under certain circumstances during private transactions. Currently, background checks are only required when purchasing a firearm from a FFL dealer, but private transactions between citizens are exempt from having to

do so. The bill would have expanded background check requirements to places such as gun shows, transactions conducted over the internet, or a transaction that results from an advertisement in a publication. Personal transactions between friends and family would still be exempt as long as the sale was not the result of an advertisement online or in a publication. Otherwise a background check through NICS would be required, and could be done at an FFL who likely would charge a small monetary fee (Manchin, 2013).

The law also expanded upon H.R. 2640 by incentivizing states to continue to comply with the mandated information sharing to the Attorney General for NICS. States that complied would be entitled to additional grant money for their participation, while states that were found to be less than compliant would see a reduction in federal funding. It would have also reduced restrictions on the ability to sell rifles, shotguns, and handguns, between states through licensed dealers, incentivizing the use of the background check system (Manchin, 2013). Senator Manchin's office went as far as to note in a press release that Seung-Hui Cho would have not been able to purchase the firearms he used for the Virginia Tech shooting had this information been provided (Moorhead, 2013).

The last major change would have been the introduction of a commission that was assigned the task of studying in-depth the causes of mass violence in the United States. This component of the bill was not as contested as other aspects. Efforts would have focused on understanding the availability of firearms, including how they are acquired, issues related to mental health, and the extent of the role that firearms play in acts of mass violence. In 2013, the mental status of individuals who committed mass violence was beginning to gain more traction in American politics as mass shootings were on the rise

outside of academic environments.

The bill would ultimately not pass in the Senate, achieving 54 of the required 60 votes needed to proceed through congress (Library of Congress, 2013). However, H.R.2640 and S.649 provide valuable insight into how law makers attempted to keep campuses and the general public safe. The concepts found in both pieces of legislation also indicate that campus carry was not often the first solution sought by legislature during a time when shootings, especially at schools, were a growing trend in the United States. The ideas offered can perhaps provide the building blocks needed to find the best solution for keeping people safe, while illustrating methods that have been tried in the past but may have not met expectations.

IV. TEXAS CONCEALED CARRY AND CAMPUS CARRY LEGISLATION

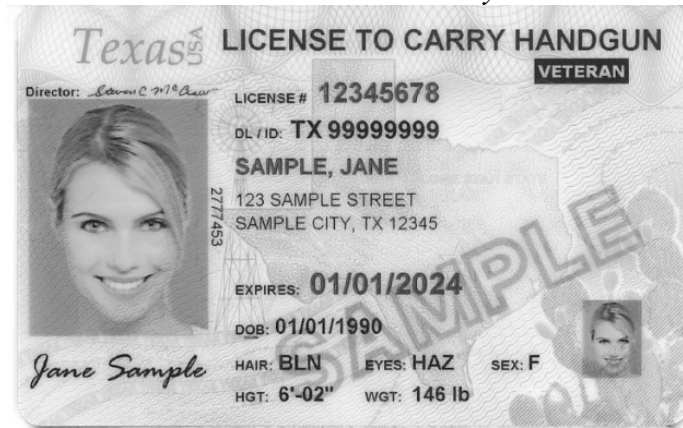
This section will address the requirements outlined by the state of Texas to obtain a License to Carry (LTC) and provide a breakdown of S.B. 11 as it relates to LTC recipients at Texas institutions of higher education. It will then lead into a comparison of campus carry legislation between Texas and the states of Colorado and Idaho, both of which passed campus carry legislation prior to Texas.

Requirements

In the state of Texas a person is required to possess an LTC in order to conceal carry a firearm, specifically a handgun, within the state. A handgun is defined as “any firearm that is designed, made, or adapted to be fired with one hand” (86th Texas Legislature, 2019). After completing the state requirement, a person is issued a card that looks similar to a driver license, but with several different identifiable aspects as seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Just like getting a driver license or any other state issued permit,

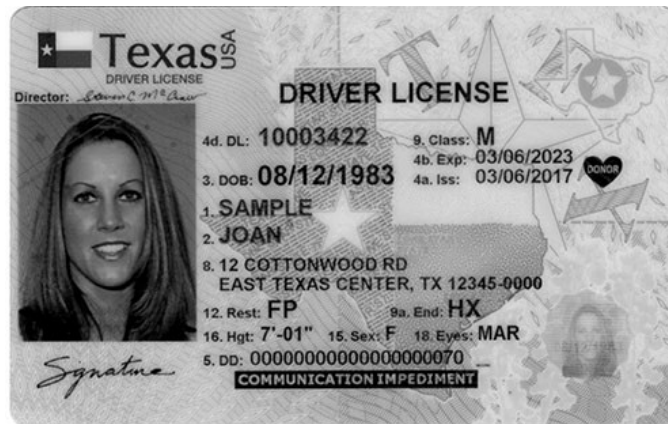
there is a series of requirements that have to be fulfilled. They range from passing several tests to providing proper identification to ensure the person with the LTC is not disqualified from possessing one. This section is going to provide details on what is required to get an LTC, identify individuals who are eligible, and outline the laws that LTC recipients must abide by while carrying a concealed firearm.

Figure 1
Texas License to Carry



Note. (Texas Department of Safety, 2020)

Figure 2
Texas Driver License



Note. (Texas Department of Safety, 2020)

According to the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Regulatory Services Division - License to Carry a Handgun website, a person will need the following when submitting an application for an LTC: valid driver license or identification card,

residential and employment information for the last five years, information regarding any psychiatric drug, alcohol, or criminal history, and a valid email address. All of this information can then be uploaded through the DPS website. If a person is able to provide each pieces of information, they can then begin the process of obtaining an LTC from the state of Texas.

Once a person has completed the necessary paperwork, they are then required to complete either an in person or online period of instruction with a state certified instructor. The online or in person instruction typically takes four to six hours, with a pass or fail written test at the end. The course focuses on the safe handling, use and storage of handguns, while also outlining concealed carry laws and stipulations in Texas. Once a person has successfully completed this portion of the training, they are required to attend one to two hours of range certification where they must demonstrate proficiency with a handgun (Texas Department of Public Safety & 86th Texas Legislature, 2019). This includes demonstrating proper firearm safety handling and passing an accuracy test that consists of 50 rounds of ammunition being shot at a human silhouetted target from three, seven, and fifteen yards away. The target measures 45 inches by 24 inches, roughly the size of an average adult torso, with separate scoring rings. Figure 3 depicts the target used during this process. There is a time limit to fire each round at the different yard lines, and a passing score is 175 points out of a possible 250 points (Texas Concealed Carry Institute, 2018). Once a person passes both the written and shooting test, they will receive a certificate of completion and are then ready to move on to the next step of the process.

Figure 3
Texas Concealed Handgun License B-27 Training Target



Note. (Action Target, 2020)

The last thing a person will do is to document their fingerprints. The state has provided a list of certified companies on the DPS website where an appointment can be made to complete this task. The state will then use the personal information that was originally uploaded to the DPS website, along with the provided fingerprints, to run a background check to confirm a person's eligibility. The background check is conducted at both the national and state level in two separate processes. The FBI, at the request of the state, will send a person's fingerprints through the FBI database and NICS to determine if there is any disqualifying criminal history at the national level (Texas Gun Sense, 2020). Additionally, Texas DPS will run a person's information through the Texas Computerized Criminal History System since there is a chance that information has not been reported from the state into NICS yet. The Texas Computerized Criminal History System is a statewide database that seeks additional information from local authorities in

the areas where a person has resided (Texas Gun Sense, 2020). The background check process is conducted when a person initially applies for an LTC, and each time they renew their license, which is required every five years. Texas has grown its participation in the NICS program over the years, passing laws that require state government entities to submit certain information. An example includes H.B. 3352 of 2009, which requires district and county clerks to provide mental health adjudications, including commitments to mental health facilities, from as far back as September 1, 1989 to present (81st Texas Legislature, 2009).

The extent of the background check process for a Texas LTC far exceeds what is required to purchase a firearm by eligible citizens from a Federal Firearms License (FFL) dealer. Federal law prevents an FFL from selling rifles and shotguns, often referred to as long guns in law, to anyone under the age of 18, and handguns to anyone under the age of 21 (U.S. Law Shield, 2018). For gun dealers seeking to obtain a FFL, the process begins by submitting an application to the ATF Federal Firearms Licensing Center. From there, the application will be reviewed, in-depth background checks will be initiated, and an investigator will be sent to go over federal, state and local laws with the applicant (U.S. Department of Justice, 2020). An FFL allows dealers to streamline the process of transporting and receiving firearms for their place of business through the mail and over state lines (Federal Government of the United States, 2016). Therefore, an FFL is typically only held by business owners and not your everyday citizen. When purchasing a firearm from an FFL in Texas, the only required background check that needs to be performed is through NICS, and not the state database like when obtaining an LTC. If no disqualifying information comes back, the sale can be completed. This demonstrates that

the vetting process is far more extensive for an LTC holder than what is required when an ordinary citizen purchases a firearm.

There are several key disqualifying factors that would make a person ineligible to receive an LTC. Some of the more notable criteria include being under the age of 21, having been convicted of a felony, having been convicted of a Class A or Class B misdemeanor within the last five years, and receiving a dishonorable discharge from the armed forces (Texas Department of Public Safety & 86th Texas Legislature, 2019). Other factors such as drug use for a mental health condition, delinquent child support payments and unpaid taxes also are taken into consideration when applying for an LTC. In the long run, the process to get an LTC is generally tedious, taking time and effort on the part of the applicant to make sure everything is completed correctly. The weight of responsibility should be understood by every person who applies for an LTC, as evident by the extensive process to obtain one.

Senate Bill 11

On January 26, 2015, the Texas 84th Legislature convened and filed campus carry legislation S.B. 11. In March, the Texas Senate would pass the bill by a 20-11 vote, and later in May the Texas House would confirm the bill with a 98-47 vote (84th Texas Legislature, 2015). On June 13, 2015 Governor Greg Abbott signed the bill into law, sparking controversies that still persist at the time of this writing. The law went into effect on August 1, 2016 for all four year public universities, which also happened to be the 50 year anniversary of the UT Campus shooting committed by Charles Whitman (Adams, 2015).

Prior to S.B. 11, Texas had passed another law related to firearms on college

campuses. In 2013, the Texas Senate proposed S.B. 1907. This particular law would prohibit institutions of higher education in Texas from enacting policies or regulations that prohibited a licensed concealed carry holder from transporting and storing firearms and ammunition in a locked, privately owned or leased vehicle on campus (83rd Texas Legislature, 2013). The term “campus” would refer to the land and buildings that was either owned or leased by an institution, insinuating that parking garages and all publicly accessible parking lots would be included in the law. The law passed in the Senate with a 27-4 vote in April of 2013, and then passed in the House with a 124-13 vote in May of 2013. Later, Governor Rick Perry would sign the bill into law, which took effect on September 1, 2013 (83rd Texas Legislature, 2013). It is important to note that this law only applied to the transportation and storage of firearms and ammunition in vehicles, and not the lawful carrying of firearms on campus within classrooms or other campus facilities. Nevertheless, the ground work for the expansion by future campus carry legislation had been set.

Nearly three years later, S.B. 11 would become law. A common misconception that was quickly addressed after the law was passed was to reassure the public that this did not allow for citizens to openly carry their weapon at institutions of higher education. This is expressly indicated in S.B. 11, which repeatedly states that only the “concealed carrying” of a firearm is authorized on campuses (84th Texas Legislature, 2015). Open carry refers to when a person is knowingly openly brandishing their firearm for others to see, such as on their hip or slung over their shoulder. The only people allowed to openly carry on campus are police officers and other designated personnel by the university, such as those performing color guard ceremonies for example. S.B. 11 also indicates that

the person carrying a firearm must be licensed to do so by the state. This excludes anyone without a proper license from bringing a firearm onto campus, even if they are legally allowed to own a handgun. If a person intentionally or recklessly does so, they are committing an illegal act and can be subsequently charged.

A person who is licensed and chooses to carry a firearm concealed on campus also has several key stipulations they must follow in order to be in compliance with the law. For starters, the statute only covers handguns. For the purpose of this writing with regards to campus carry and concealed carry, the words “firearm” and “handgun” are used interchangeably. The word “concealed” means that the weapon must be out of sight at all times, unless in the act of being used. This goes for any licensed person who is carrying concealed on or off campus. The firearm must also be on or about the person who is carrying it at all times while on campus. This means that the firearm can be physically held on the body or in a bag, such as a backpack or purse, as long as the individual doesn’t have to materially change positions in order to access it. Essentially, the firearm has to be in arms reach at all times without you having to readjust your body in order to grab it. While this stipulation is detailed, there is still a certain level of interpretation that can be exercised depending on the situation.

There are also places on college campuses that are still restricted from concealed carry. Areas where school sponsored activities are being conducted, such as competitive sporting events and pre-kindergarten through high school activities being held on campus are amongst those off limit areas. Other prohibited areas include any site or building that is being used as a polling station for an election. If a campus member works in or attends a building that has been designated as a polling station, for the duration of the time it is

being used for such purpose, that area will remain off limits to campus carry until polling is complete (College of the Mainland, 2020). Other restricted areas include places where the potential of an accident involving a firearm would have catastrophic effects, such as a laboratory environment where volatile substances are being kept. The law also allows for the “president or other chief executive officer of an institution of higher education in this state shall establish reasonable rules, regulations, or other provisions regarding the carrying of concealed handguns by license holders on the campus of the institution or on premises located on the campus of the institution” (84th Texas Legislature, 2015). In other words, this means that the president or chief executive officer of an institution of higher education can compile a list of additional off limits areas within a designated time frame to be submitted to the state. However, they couldn’t “establish provisions that generally prohibit or have the effect of generally prohibiting license holders from carrying concealed handguns on the campus of the institution,” denoting that not just any area could be made off limits. This would spark heated debates as campus officials appointed committees to consult with students, staff and faculty about general opinions held throughout campuses regarding potential regulations.

State Campus Carry Comparison

In recent times more states have begun to pass legislation that allows for the carrying of concealed firearms in some capacity on college campuses. In fact, Texas was not the first state to pass campus carry legislation. In 2015, when the Texas Legislature voted in favor of S.B. 11, seven other states had already passed similar legislation. These states included Colorado and Idaho, and the components of the laws that they enacted were more than likely examined by Texas officials to assess their viability. This section

will provide a comparison of campus carry legislation between Texas and both Colorado and Idaho.

In 2003 the Colorado Legislature passed S.B. 03-024 with regards to the carrying of concealed firearms within the state. More importantly, this statute was later used as justification during a lawsuit brought by students against a University of Colorado campus regulation banning the carrying of concealed firearms on university grounds. In 2012, the Colorado Supreme Court in favor of the students, effectively ending the ban. Like Texas, Colorado's S.B. 03-024 only bans the carrying of firearms, open or concealed, on K-12 establishments unless an individual is designated by the school district as security personnel under Title 18, Article 12-214 of Colorado law (Colorado Bureau of Investigations, 2020). An individual who has not met the state requirement and does not possess a valid Concealed Handgun Permit (CHP), similar to an LTC in Texas, is not allowed to conceal carry on a public higher education campus. However, a person who does have a valid CHP is permitted to conceal carry on campus, and the right to do so may not be infringed upon by the establishment (General Assembly of the State of Colorado, 2003).

The requirements to obtain a CHP in Colorado mirror those of Texas when applying for an LTC in several ways. The applicant must be 21 years of age, have their fingerprints taken for a criminal background check, and have completed an approved handgun training course as outlined by the state of Colorado. Unlike Texas though, this training has to be completed entirely in person with a certified instructor or equivalent law enforcement personnel. There is no online equivalent. However, the training is focused more on the safe handling of handguns rather than the laws governing the use of

a CHP. The permit is also valid for five years just like Texas (Gifford Law Center, 2019).

Research into concealed carry on college campuses in Colorado yielded vague and/or broad regulations. Compared to Colorado, Texas appears to have more concise regulations based on the level of detail found in S.B. 11. When dealing with a law that could potentially involve life and death consequences, it is reassuring to see more specific legislation being put in place in Texas, although there is always room for improvement.

Idaho is another state that has passed legislation allowing licensed individuals to conceal carry firearms on campus. Idaho is slightly different in the way that the state issues its Concealed Weapons License (CWL), which is similar to a Texas LTC or a Colorado CHP. On March 25, 2020 House Bill 516 was signed into law, taking effect on July 1, 2020 and making Idaho a permit-less state, also referred to as constitutional carry (United States Concealed Carry Association, 2020). The state will still issue a physical CWL upon request for the purpose of carrying in other reciprocity states. This means that anyone who meets the requirements to lawfully possess a handgun, including non-state residents, are allowed to carry concealed throughout the state as long as they remain eligible under Idaho law (65th Idaho Legislature, 2020). However, college campuses are an exception to this new law.

On March 12, 2014 S.B. 1254 was signed into law by the Governor of Idaho. This bill requires that a person obtains a valid “enhanced” CWL in order to conceal carry on a public college or university campus in Idaho (62nd Idaho Legislature, 2014). Due to Idaho’s low level of requirements with regards to their standard CWL, some states do not recognize the standard license. However, an individual is able to apply for an enhanced CWL, if they meet all of the requirements, which is recognized in several states and

allows them to carrying a concealed handgun on college campuses versus the standard CWL. To be eligible for an enhanced CWL, an individual must be over the age of 21, have been a legal resident of the state for six consecutive months, provide fingerprints for a criminal background check, and completed a state qualified handgun course by a certified instructor (Idaho State Legislature, 2020). The course must be done face to face, and be a minimum of eight hours in duration covering specific topics outlined in Title 18, Chapter 33-02K. There is also a live fire test administered by the certified instructor.

When compared to Texas, Idaho varies with its implementation of campus carry legislation, but there are some similarities. Both states require a license holder to be 21 year of age to carry on campus, and areas such as sports venues are off limits regardless of whether the person is a license holder. Idaho strictly prohibits conceal carry in residence halls (62nd Idaho Legislature, 2014), while Texas has left this up to the individual institutions to decide (84th Texas Legislature, 2015), although many have elected to make these areas off limits as well. Texas also allows for certain LTC training requirements to be done online, while Idaho's enhanced CWL is required to be done entirely in person. After examining Idaho's S.B. 1254, it is clear that certain provisions may have been appropriated for the purpose of S.B. 11 in Texas.

V. TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES

After S.B. 11 was signed into law in 2015, public institutions of higher education were allowed to implement policies regarding campus carry that fell within the parameters of the law as mentioned in the previous chapter. The law, broadly speaking, stipulates that any policy put forth by a school cannot generally prohibit the concealed carrying of firearms on campus, but they could submit additional areas to be made off

limits based on three criteria. These three criteria are the nature of the student population, areas of specific safety consideration, and the uniqueness of the campus environment (84th Texas Legislature, 2015). In order to find a balance between the needs of establishing additional policy without infringing on the rights of the campus community, the President of Texas State University established a 25 person Campus Carry Task Force per the guidelines of S.B. 11.

The intent of the task force to was to provide recommendations based on the stipulations of S.B. 11, expert opinion, school members' and community view points, and other important areas of consideration. Members of the task force included faculty and staff from different departments throughout the university, representatives from the University Police Department (UDP) and the director of the Texas State Advance Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center (Opheim & Brittain, 2018, p.169). The intent was to assemble as much of a well versed and all inclusive group as possible. Each member brought their own levels of understanding, representation and expertise to the table that would prove to be invaluable as the task force worked to fulfill its duties.

Once the task force concluded its research and provided its recommendations, guidelines were published shortly thereafter. As required by S.B. 11, Texas State University has published all school guidelines via the main school website under the title of "Campus Carry." The university also sent out notifications to all school members about where to find the new guidelines, helping to provide reasonable expectations on what to expect during the implementation of campus carry. To date, there have been no known incidents involving violations of these guidelines by an LTC holder.

Aside from the regulations already put into place by S.B. 11, there are some notable additional rules outlined by Texas State University UPPS No. 01.04.45. Currently, the university does not consider dormitories to be prohibited areas for concealed carry, as long as it is not a facility that is being used to house minors during events where they might be present, such as summer camps and activities. A majority of students living in the university residence halls are undergraduate students who are below the age to obtain a LTC, so the chances of encountering someone who is conceal carrying a firearm is considered to be very unlikely. After speaking with the Texas State University Department of Housing and Residence Life for the 2019-2020 school year, records indicate that only 2-3% of residents on campus are over the age of 21, the age needed to obtain an LTC. The university also opted out of providing a storage location on campus for students and faculty, although current Texas law allows for the storage of firearms in a person's privately owned vehicle on campus as long as it is properly secured (Texas State Office of the Vice President for University Administration, 2020).

Areas that have been designated as gun-free zones on campus include any area that is providing services or events for minor children such as the Child Development Center or other areas where children's events or activities may be taking place, whether temporary or permanent. Other areas with gun-free designations include premises providing health, legal, or counseling services such as the 5th floor of the LBJ Student Center. Official residence locations are also off limits, including the University President's House (Texas State University, 2020). Due to the confusion that would ensue with permitting individual faculty to either allow or disallow campus carry in their classrooms or private offices, especially since some classrooms and offices are shared or

in connecting structural layouts, both types of locations have been designated as permissible campus carry areas as long as they don't reside within one of the gun-free designated zones previously mentioned (Opheim & Brittain, 2018, p.176).

A final important guideline that was put into place was the inability for university members to ask if a person is carrying a firearm. While it is the responsibility of the person carrying the firearm to keep it concealed at all times, it is also their right to not be questioned if they have a license or if they are carrying anytime while on campus (Texas State University, 2020). The intention of anyone lawfully concealing a firearm on campus should be to keep its existence unknown so that no one feels uncomfortable while in the learning environment. Hopefully, anyone who is carrying a firearm during their time at Texas State University never finds themselves in a situation where they feel the need to use it for self defense. The goal is to keep everyone safe while maintaining a rich learning environment for all.

Comparison of University Regulations

It is worth comparing the rules that Texas State University has implemented in accordance with S.B. 11 to those implemented by the University of Texas due their close proximity and both being large Texas universities in terms of student and faculty populations. Similar to Texas State University, the University of Texas appointed a task force comprised of members of their university to help establish reasonable guidelines for the implementation of campus carry. While this study was unable to interview anyone from that task force, there was a great deal of public backlash at the University of Texas once S.B. 11 was signed into law. Large protests and rallies were held on the university grounds and around Austin, and three professors brought a law suit against the state over

campus carry while another professor resigned shortly after the law went into effect. Regardless, the task force at the University of Texas made its recommendations and the guidelines have since been published on their main university website under the title of Campus Carry.

Some similarities between the two universities include the prohibiting of concealed carry at medical health facilities and locations where minor children are present for events and activities. However, the University of Texas has designated university housing as a prohibited area, with a few exceptions. Common areas within the dormitory itself are designated as campus carry locations. A visiting family member may conceal carry as long as the firearm stays on or about their person, and staff members who are required to be in residence housing as part of their work may also conceal carry. University apartments are also an exception to the rule, but have strict stipulations on how the firearm is to be stored, including the strength and location of locked safe boxes (University of Texas, 2020). The university doesn't offer a place for students to store their firearms, similar to Texas State University.

The University of Texas also allows discretion to office occupants on whether they want their office to be a gun-free zone, unlike Texas State University. However, the office itself must be solely assigned to that individual, have a door, walls that extend to the ceiling, and not be generally accessible to the public. If an occupant wishes his/her office to be a gun-free zone, verbal notice must be immediately given. This discretion does not extend to the classroom, and faculty are not allowed to prohibit campus carry in these locations. Other designated gun-free zones include areas where the potential for catastrophic damage or danger is high, such as laboratories with flammable or explosive

chemicals, similar to the regulations put forth by Texas State University (Associate Vice President for Campus Safety and Security, 2017).

VI. COMMON RATIONALE FOR AND AGAINST CAMPUS CARRY

It is important to understand the arguments for and against campus carry in order to add context to where the campus carry discussion originates. This paper does not look to confirm nor diminish the validity of any argument, simply to shed light on the premises that have made this such an impassioned agenda for many people. Based on common viewpoints shared by campus carry and concealed carry advocacy groups on both sides, the following are the most prominent arguments that were found during the course of this research.

For Campus Carry

For some, campus carry is more than just about reducing the amount of potential violence on college campuses. It is also about an inherent right to self defense that is derived from the United States Constitution. Proponents argue that irrational people exist on campuses and are a capable of committing acts of violence. While the opposition argues that more guns on campus will only allow irrational people more accessibility to commit violence, proponents argue they will commit violence regardless and law abiding citizens should have a means to defend themselves and fight back (Burnett, 2020).

Another argument is that law enforcement personnel are unable to be dispatched quickly enough to stop an individual from committing violence in many situations. A prime example comes from the Virginia Tech shooting where the gunman was in a single location during the main part of his attack and was able to commit mass murder before the police arrived on scene to intervene. Their stance is that allowing citizens to lawfully

carry concealed firearms on campus will diminish the chances of violent events occurring or growing in scale. Attackers may think twice if there is the possibility of encountering a lawful citizen who is carrying a concealed firearm. The claim even goes as far as to state that crimes such as sexual assaults may also be avoided, which happens disproportionately to women (Burnett, 2020).

The last major stance that proponents of campus carry provided is that only people with specific qualifications can have concealed carry licenses, and not just anyone would be allowed to carry on campus (Students for Concealed Carry, 2020). Requiring people to attend training and go through additional background checks means that only qualified individuals would be carrying firearms. Ensuring there is a standard only allows those people with the necessary skills and understanding of the law to exercise a right that adds to their protection and the people around them.

Against Campus Carry

Just as there are people who are strong advocates for campus carry, there are those who are just as passionate about not having campus carry at their schools. One of the prevalent arguments made against campus carry is that more guns on campus simply increases the chances of accidental incidents (Pelosi & Johnson, 2014). This includes guns being accidentally left unattended around campus such as in locker-rooms, common areas, and classrooms. There is also the potential for a negligent discharge of a firearm. This could be due to a lapse of judgment, malfunction, or a blatant disregard for safety procedures. Either way, the consequences could be fatal. Although uncommon, all of the described examples have occurred in the United States on college campuses in recent times (Martin, 2018).

The presence of guns has also been associated with an increase in the likelihood of suicide. College campuses are filled with a variety of stressors, and some argue that increasing the amount of guns on campus will only serve to give those wishing to commit harm to themselves easy access to do so. Self inflicted gun shots are the most common form of suicide amongst people 18-25 years old in the United States, and they are also the most likely to attempt suicide or have suicidal thoughts (National Institute of Mental Health, 2019). Advocates against campus carry argue that, compared to other suicide methods, such as drug overdose, where the victim has a better chance of being saved and getting help, access to a gun would make it less likely that someone would be able to intervene before the act is fatal.

Another common argument is the physical and mental costs associated with allowing campus carry. Aside from the potential monetary increase in insurance costs that an institution may face (Gonzalez, 2011), there is the impact the school may face in recruiting and retaining faculty members. Opponents have argued that the college atmosphere and reputation have been put at stake by allowing guns onto campus. There are even cases where faculty members have resigned in response to the passing of campus carry at institutions around the country (Rhodan, 2015). There is also the possibility that college discussions of a sensitive nature may be inhibited for fear that someone involved might be carrying a gun and lose control of their emotions.

Finally, there is an argument that the minimum training requirements to obtain an LTC or equivalent are currently too low (Gifford Law Center, 2018). Compared to the time spent in professions that carry a firearm on a regular basis, the civilian requirements are significantly less, even though an individual could be carrying a firearm on them for

an extended amount of time throughout the day. There are also states that don't require a recertification of training to renew a concealed carry license, such as Texas, where as other law enforcement entities typically have to complete a requalification process semi-annually or annually. Texas does not have a training recertification requirement at the time of renewal.

VII. METHODS

For the purpose of this study, the author conducted interviews with faculty, staff and students who have attended Texas State University since the implementation of campus carry legislation in Texas. A total of 21 people were interviewed, all of whom were associated with the university and spent an extended time on campus at some point in the last four years. The interviews were comprised of ten students, ten faculty members, and one representative from the Texas State University Police Department. Of the ten students that participated, seven were undergraduate students and three were graduate students. Of the ten faculty members that participated, four served on the Texas State University Campus Carry Task Force that was commissioned after S.B. 11 was passed in 2015. Care was taken to ensure that participants were pulled from different departments throughout the university to gather a variety of viewpoints and provide a more holistic understanding of the campus community.

The purpose of this research was to determine if students and faculty at Texas State University were aware of the implementation of campus carry legislation passed in Texas, and the subsequent regulations put forth by the university. The study then afforded the participants an opportunity to express their view points on the topic, and provide feedback on how campus carry has impacted them during their time at Texas State

University. This research also examined the procedures followed by the Texas State University Police Department in order to disseminate guidance to the public. Due to the sensitivity of the subject, the identity of all the participants has been kept confidential. Confidentiality was paramount to ensure participants felt comfortable sharing their true thoughts without the fear of public criticism or repercussions.

The information was gathered through systematic one-to-one interviews with participants in accordance with the Texas State University Institutional Review Board. By conducting interviews rather than disseminating questionnaire or surveys, the author was able to gather a deeper understanding of how each participant felt and allow for more in depth explanations to the answers given. It also allowed for the interviewee to ask for clarification on certain questions in order to give a more accurate response. This simply can't be done easily with the dissemination of questionnaire. After making contact via email, a date and time was agreed upon by the primary investigator and the participants. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, all interviews were conducted via the Zoom video communications platform. A standardized set of questions was asked of each participant and can be found in Appendix A. The participants who were members of the Texas State University Campus Carry Task Force were asked additional questions about their experiences while on the task force. These questions can be found in Appendix B. At the end of each interview, participants were encouraged to share any final thoughts, opinions, or information they might have that was not covered earlier in the interview.

The information gained from this study will help to clarify a topic that has not typically been associated with life on a college campus. Because the laws and regulations surrounding this subject were only passed in 2016, there has not been any research

conducted specifically for Texas State University that the author is aware of since the university initiated a Campus Carry Task Force to make policy recommendations. It will afford a better understanding of how allowing members of Texas State University to carry concealed firearms on campus has impacted the academic environment and whether people feel the policies in place are adequate or beneficial.

The remainder of this study was conducted through academic and scholarly research. Online databases were particularly useful, along with academic journals and newspaper articles that were relevant to campus carry. Government websites were used to pull referenced legislative documents, and the most recent university data on campus carry was taken from the Texas State University webpage.

VIII. RESULTS

Once all 21 interviews were completed, the data was compiled and analyzed for common and differentiated trends. For the purpose of analyzing the information taken from the interviews, each respective interview was put into a select category. The category breakdown consisted of dividing the interviews into students, faculty, Campus Carry Task Force and the Texas State University Police Department. It is important to note that members of the Campus Carry Task Force also had their opinions taken into account in the faculty category. The Campus Carry Task Force category takes into account the additional line of questioning members received separate from the rest of the faculty. This section will break down the answers and opinions of each category and then outline the concerns and arguments of Texas State University members as compared to those expressed at the national level.

Student Opinions

A total of ten students were interviewed from various departments throughout Texas State University. Of those ten students, three were graduate students. When asked if they were aware that students over the age of 21 were allowed to legally carry a handgun on campus with a proper license, six answered no while the remaining four answered yes. This indicates that there could be a significant number of students on campus that are not aware concealed firearms are allowed on campus by licensed individuals. One student, that was unaware that campus carry existed, expressed concern that student orientations may not emphasize this particular aspect of campus life as much as they should. Among the four students who were aware of campus carry, one stated that it crosses their mind often, while the remaining three said they spend little to no time thinking about it while on campus. It is important to point out that the one student who thought often about campus carry served as a teaching assistant on campus. She emphasized her regular interaction with students in regards to grades as a potential concern for impulsive behavior, but also noted the legal age to carry was 21 and the number of students she interacted with over that age was limited.

When asked how safe each student would feel if they knew another student around them was legally carrying a concealed firearm while in the learning environment, the results were mixed. Four students replied that they would still feel safe while only one student felt less safe. The other five students said it depended on what type of learning environment they were in, but would for the most part feel no impact on their ability to learn. The level of experience the person who was legally carrying a firearm was also mentioned as a factor for some students. If they knew the person had prior military

training or an extensive firearms background, then the level of security would increase for them, while someone with bare minimum experience would potentially be a little more unnerving.

When asked about their feelings on the level of impact campus carry has had on the overall safety on campus, three said it has increased while none said that they felt it has actually decreased. Five students said it had no impact while the remaining two said that it would be hard to say, and felt the lack of incidences involving armed individuals on campus provides little data for them to make an informed decision. The idea that students and faculty could contribute to the overall safety on campus was an idea shared by several students, but reservations about the quality of individual carrying were still present.

The last question asked involved campus carry's ability to deter a person from coming to campus and committing violent acts. Two students said that they believed it would potentially deter a person, while five said it would not, with the consensus being that a person looking to do harm will do so regardless of the chances that they may or may not encounter a legally armed student or faculty member. The remaining three students also felt it would do little to deter a person, but noted that the rationality of the perpetrator would have to be taken into account. However, each of these students mentioned that someone considering an illegal act of violence would already be behaving irrationally and thus their opinions would fall more into the no category. Overall, student tended to be comfortable with the concept of campus carry based on their responses, even those who were previously unaware of campus carry, but valid concerns were still expressed.

Faculty Opinions

The views of the ten Texas State University faculty members interviewed varied in several ways from those of the students. All ten faculty members were aware that campus carry legislation was passed in Texas. When asked if it crosses their minds that students and faculty around them could potentially be legally carrying a concealed firearm, three stated that it regularly did. One of those three interviewees said it crosses their mind every time they enter a classroom. Three other faculty members said it occasionally crosses their minds, while the remaining four said little to not at all.

With regards to the impact it has had on the learning environment, the most common response was that the environment has become potentially less safe, but many expressed that it has also not impacted the way they teach and the quality of education they are able to provide. Others said they were concerned about bringing contentious topics up in lectures, and therefore did feel they have been limited in their ability to provide quality education opportunities. When asked about the overall safety on campus, the majority felt that there has been no impact, but only due to the lack of events that have transpired regarding the matter. During the interviews, the general feeling of those that said there hasn't been an impact on safety was that campus carry definitely made the idea of campus becoming less safe more plausible. However, without evidence they were not quite ready to say it has made the campus less safe. One faculty member did mention that people will always continue to push the envelope when it comes to the campus's guidelines, and by not abiding by them the safety of the campus could deteriorate quickly. However, three faculty members believe the safety level has actually decreased since campus carry was implemented due to a variety of factors and concerns, some of

which will be discussed later on. They stated there are certain things they will no longer do and habits they have altered. Examples given were not teaching large classes anymore and only meeting students in public areas rather than in their offices one-on-one unless the student is well known to them. There was only one faculty member that believed the overall safety had increased. Figure 4 provides a comparison between students and faculty regarding feelings of the overall safety level at Texas State University.

Figure 4
Impact of Campus Carry on Texas State University Safety

Opinion on Safety Level	Students	Faculty	Total Percentage
Increased	3	1	20%
No Impact	5	6	55%
Decreased	0	3	15%
Undecided	2	0	10%

Note. Created by author

As with the students, each faculty member was asked to share their views on whether campus carry would deter a person from committing violent acts on campus, such as an active shooter. One member said yes while another four said no, with one person mentioning that it might even serve to escalate a situation if an individual with a concealed firearm chooses to get involved. The fact that people have attacked places with armed security or police in the past was given as an example to support this stance. The remaining five faculty members said there was a possibility, but more often than not it would not deter a person. Even so, one member stated that campus carry has given lawful people a chance to intervene and help protect others, possibly giving a potential aggressor pause depending on if they are able to exercise any rationality at that point.

Task Force Members Experiences

Given the impact that the task force had on campus carry at Texas State University, additional questions were asked of the four faculty members that participated on it and were interviewed during this study. First and foremost, each member, regardless of their views on campus carry, was proud of how well the task force conducted itself and the professionalism that was exhibited during its proceedings and live events. During the proceedings, a main point of interest was ensuring that the legislation was understood correctly when recommendations were being made for off limits areas. With that being said, once the off limits locations were chosen, the information needed to be disseminated in a way that reached everyone to minimize the chance of confusion.

Another main focus was to make sure the task force heard from a diverse array of people, and that their concerns were given consideration. To do this, people from the university and the public were invited to town halls and encouraged to participate in online surveys. S.B. 11 had already been passed into law, so no amount of debate would be able to change that or the stipulations it mandated. However, since the law did allow a level of discretion to each individual university, it was important for the task force to hear what people had to say and address the concerns that were being brought to their attention. For the decisions that the task force had leeway on, they wanted to make sure they made informed decisions. Some people just simply wanted their voice to be heard.

Some of the main concerns that were brought up during public meetings, surveys, and by other task force members were acts of violence being committed by those carrying a firearm during a heated debate. People did not want the learning experience to be stifled from the fear of repercussion due to the potential that another student might be carrying a

firearm. Another concern was the potential increase in accidents on campus involving firearms. According to some interviewees, varied levels of experience with firearms played a key role in understanding the legislation and the concerns raised, so the task force made it priority to address some of these concerns to the best of their ability. One task force member mentioned they got the feeling that people who were not familiar with firearms generally opposed it versus those that had grown up around or been formally introduced to firearms at some point during their life. That same faculty member went on to express that people with familiarization tended to be the ones who were not bothered by campus carry during task force meetings and town halls. This suggested that familiarity with firearms in general could have been a main driving factor for some people's attitudes towards campus carry.

University Police Perspective

Campus Carry has had a meaningful impact on the Texas State University Police Department. The department is in some ways still learning how to conduct business on campus knowing that there are an unknown amount of armed students and faculty on campus at any given time. For police officers on campus, the way they respond to certain situations is completely different than ordinary people. During the event of an active shooting, most people will be attempting to get away from the violence, while the police will be rushing to respond in order to bring the violence to an end. With the introduction of additional firearms on campus, in the hands of individuals other than the police, the potential dynamics of a situation have changed dramatically.

The police department representative wanted to first make it clear that people with legally concealed firearms on campus are not police officers, and should not expect, or be

expected, to conduct themselves in the same way. For that reason, it was advised that should an active shooter situation occur on campus, individuals with concealed firearms should not attempt to respond to the situation. An assailant committing a shooting is often associated with the environment they are in, such as in the case of the University of Texas, Columbine High School and Virginia Tech, and thus they blend in with others around them. The confusion caused by this would make it difficult for police arriving on the scene to distinguish a good shooter from a bad one. This same concern was shared by former police officer Ray Martinez when he helped stop Charles Whitman during the University of Texas shooting in 1966. He was worried about accidentally shooting a civilian using a firearm who was trying to help stop Whitman, and likewise he was equally as worried about being shot mistakenly by a civilian with little training under stressful circumstance such as found during an active shooting (PBS News Hour, 2017).

Another possible scenario that could arise if an individual with a concealed firearm attempts to respond to an active shooting is the possibility of encountering another person with a concealed firearm doing the exact same thing. Even though both people have good intentions, there is no way of rapidly distinguishing each other. With adrenaline flowing, there is a good chance a fatal accident between the two could occur even though both were simply trying to help the situation. For these reasons it is advised that LTC holders only act in self defense in their immediate area.

If you are involved in a shooting, the police representative recommended that you cooperate with police as much as possible, holster your weapon immediately after, wait for police to arrive and then proceed to show the proper identification. If you are not involved, the police ask that you be a good witness. Currently, the campus police

department has no special procedure they follow when encountering a LTC holder, and therefore each encounter will be dependent on the officers involved. This level of uncertainty is another reason LTC holders should not proceed to use their firearms for any reason other than the direst of circumstances, because even a slight accidental lapse in judgment by police or the LTC holder could prove fatal for either party.

At the moment, the university police department provides active shooter training, called Civilian Response to Active Shooter Event (CRASE), upon request from students, faculty or staff. The model of this course is as follows: avoid the situation by escaping if possible; if you are unable to avoid the situation, try to deny the assailant access to where you are; and if neither of these is possible, how to best defend against an assailant. This training also goes over what to expect when police arrive and is full of excellent survival techniques and comes recommended by the university police department. However, the demand for this training has been very low over the years. There is also no training that is currently offered at the university specifically designed for LTC holders.

In all, the main focus of the university police department is the safety of everyone on campus. According to the interviewee, there have not been any incidents or violations involving LTC holders and their firearms on campus that the representative was aware of since campus carry began.

Concerns at Texas State University

During the conclusion of the interview process in this study, there were many valid concerns that were raised by all participants. Some of these concerns were aligned with what is typically discussed at the national level. Others were less common, but are nonetheless worthy of discussion. In order to educate the public and those making

decisions on the matter, concerns need to be brought to the forefront of the discussion.

One of the main concerns frequently brought up throughout this study was the level of training an LTC holder receives to obtain their license. As stated earlier in section IV, to obtain an LTC an individual is only required to attend one to two hours of firearms handling training and pass a certification test. Afterwards there is no requirement to participate in any additional training, even when renewing a license. Compared to the Texas Public Safety and Corrections Title 37, Section 218.9, law enforcement is required to qualify with their handguns annually at distances similar to that of the LTC qualification (Elaws, 2020). From this author's personal experience working security at U.S. Embassies abroad, we were required to qualify with our handguns at distances of up to 25 yards on a semiannual basis, and demonstrate firearm handling procedures quarterly. While LTC holders do not perform the same responsibilities of law enforcement or the military, there is the potential they will be carrying a handgun on their person just as often, if not more, depending on how frequently they exercise their right to carry. A person's ability to observe, orient, decide and act, often referred to as the OODA loop in the cognitive decision making process, is hampered by things such as stress or fatigue. Training is what law enforcement and the military use to refine this skill in an environment of life and death. Without consistent training, a civilian carrying a gun could be more prone to mistakes when making decisions, and the minimal amount of training needed for an LTC is what was concerning to many. For those who were not against campus carry but still concerned, a common suggestion was to require additional mandatory training to have an LTC, or at minimum require a separate certification with additional training to carry on campus. Suggestions

like these have been made before, but nothing has yet come of them.

A concern that was brought up by several Texas State University students was the ability of the police to respond to an event such as an active shooter. This is because of the size of the campus coupled with the large student population being overwhelming for the campus police department, even with the help of the San Marcos Police Department. This concern has been raised before, with the main example being the response of police during the Virginia Tech shooting. To improve this, campus procedures towards alerting the campus community of impending danger have become standard at almost all university campuses, and are becoming exponentially faster at disseminating information. With the help of mass notification systems, social media, smart devices and campus wide internet access, emergency notifications and threat assessment teams are better equipped now more than ever. The ability for campus officials to get pertinent information out to students and faculty has been one area that has seen drastic improvement in the wake of previous school shootings such as what occurred at Virginia Tech. Still, the concern among many students is the ability of police to respond if members are caught in the middle of a violent shooting where notifications are of no help. According to the most recent organization charts provided by the Texas State University Police Department, there is anywhere from four to five patrol officers on any give shift, with additional officers working at the department's main office (Texas State University Police Department, 2019, p.6). In total, the department is authorized 39 sworn officers, all of which are Texas Commission on Law Enforcement certified (Texas State University Police Department, 2019, p.5). With thousands of students and faculty on such a large campus, the ratio of officers to the remaining campus community and their ability to

respond to a crisis is what led some students to favor current campus carry legislation.

Another main concern shared amongst several of the faculty members was the number of additional guns on campus. While it is nearly impossible to calculate the number of illegal firearms brought on campus, by allowing LTC holders to also bring firearms on campus the number will surely increase. Some would argue that more firearms on campus, whether legal or not, will only increase the chances of an accident or the use of one in an altercation. Recent statistics show that only an estimated 2.5% of students on campus actually have an LTC, while it is estimated that roughly 3.5% of faculty possess an LTC (Opheim & Brittain, 2018. p.171). Chances are that not all of these individuals carry on campus, but while the percentages are low, it does offer the potential that more guns have been brought onto campus. A violent altercation with a student is also a main concern of Texas State University faculty. During class times there are often discussions that can escalate to emotional levels. Heated discussion, coupled with having to sometimes administer less than desirable grades to students who could be carrying a concealed firearm, gives faculty members reservations about the law. Considering the adolescent brain isn't fully developed until age 25 (Fetterman et al., 2020), the concern when it comes to the decision making capability of young LTC holders appears to be valid. This concern is also commonly found at the national level with university faculty.

Similarly, a concern was raised by a faculty member not necessarily against the legislation itself, but rather with the individuals that passed it. When entering the capital building or other government buildings such as a court house, there is strict enforcement on firearms not being permitted. Why should legislators who won't allow firearms to be

concealed and brought into their working environment be allowed to do it to others who might not wish it to be in theirs? Why should judges who work in courthouses where firearms aren't allowed be able to rule against a lawsuit that calls for the repeal of campus carry legislation? If legislators are concerned about their safety to the point where they won't allow firearms in their work environments, it's reasonable that others may feel the same way. This was a new perspective that had not been previously encountered.

An additional concern that came up during this study was from a faculty member who felt that clear guidance regarding an active shooter scenario is not distributed in a way that can be considered effective. The ALERRT Center offers instructional videos online of what to do if encountered by an active shooter, and training is offered upon request by the university police department, but campus specific instruction is considered to be inadequate or not well distributed. Unlike fire and other natural disaster drills that have clear cut guidance, there is not anything similar widely available on campus for active shootings. Past events have shown how simple instructions made widely known to the public can prevent a bad situation from becoming even worse.

A final concern was the idea that the campus carry debate was being taken over by the mass shooting narrative, when it can be argued that its true intentions were to protect an individual's inherent right to self defense. This right to defend one's self has to be weighed with the overall safety of the university. The risk versus reward is an important aspect to be considered, and for some who were interviewed that approach is enough to prove that campus carry is not a viable solution to the violence happening on college campuses. Others argued that both active shooters and other forms of violent crime have been stopped by people with concealed firearms in the past, just not at a

university yet. Regardless, proponents of campus carry emphasize that the narrative should be towards self defense and not changed into a solution for mass shootings.

IX. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the interviews served as a valuable way to gather information and allow members of the Texas State University community to express their opinions and concerns on the implementation of campus carry. Of the students that were interviewed, a majority of them were not aware of campus carry, and of those that did know there was often little concern about its impact. Further studies may inquire as to why there is an apparent disconnect between students and their understanding of the Texas State University guidance regarding campus carry, and how this information may be better disseminated. A majority of students also believe campus carry improves or has no impact on the safety of the Texas State University campus. Faculty members on the other hand were all aware of the implementation of campus carry legislation, and were also generally more apprehensive about the policy based on their elaborations during interview responses. Even some of those that felt it hasn't had an impact on campus safety to this point voiced concerns about how the overall level of safety could potentially decrease by allowing more firearms to be legally brought onto campus. Several faculty members also expressed concerns about the impact campus carry would have on class discussions and the learning environment in general. Further exploration of a person's background with firearms and its correlation with feelings of safety may lend understanding on whether varying levels of familiarization with firearms contribute to a person's attitude towards campus carry.

While there are certainly strong opinions on campus carry, the policy is still in its

infancy and there will undoubtedly be more opportunities to investigate it in the future. Until then, the goal of every person who legally carries a gun should be for nobody to ever know that it is there, and with luck they will never have to use it. For those who are unaware of the policy or its specific parameters, it's important to become familiar with them and explore all sides of the argument before forming an opinion. Only through a holistic effort can the issue of campus safety be addressed in a manner that brings about the necessary changes to succeed at improving the safety of college campuses.

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APPENDIX A

Standardized Questions for Interviews

Interviewee:

Background/Department:

1 - Did you know that students and faculty are permitted to conceal carry firearms on campus?

2 - Does it cross your mind on while in the learning environment that students and/or faculty around you may be concealed carrying a firearm?

3 - Would you feel less safe in the classroom environment if you knew there was a person in class carrying a legally concealed firearm?

4 - Do you think that campus carry has improved, decreased or had any impact at all on the overall safety of the university?

5 - Do you believe that campus carry would deter a person from committing violent acts on campus?

APPENDIX B

Standardized Questions for Task Force Members Interviews

Interviewee:

Represented:

- 1 - What were some of the main concerns during the proceedings?
- 2 - Was there a general consensus on the interpretations of what was to be enacted in accordance with Texas law?
- 3 - How helpful was the input of surveys and public meetings?
- 4 - What were some of the important influences on the policy?
- 5 - Do you think that campus carry has improved, decreased or had any impact at all on the overall safety of the university?
- 6 - Do you believe that campus carry would deter a person from committing violent acts on campus?