

GrassRoots GunRights

P.O. Box 2446 Lexington, SC 29071 <http://www.SCFirearms.org>

May 21, 2007

The Honorable James H. Harrison
South Carolina House of Representatives
P.O. Box 11867
Columbia, SC 29211

Re: H. 3964

Dear Rep. Harrison:

The issue of allowing concealed weapon permit (CWP) holders to possess guns in schools is an emotion-laden issue. However, in addressing this issue, our top priority must be the protection of our children. Partisan politics, the pursuits of special interest groups, and emotional fear mongering must be set aside.

- 1. Self-defense and defense of others is supported by virtually all religions. Children are not able to defend themselves. Thus, it is our moral responsibility to protect our children.**
- 2. CWP holders have a proven record of safety everywhere they are allowed to carry, including schools. SC CWP holders carried in schools prior to 1996 without incident.**
- 3. There are cases of private citizens stopping an active school shooter before the police could arrive. But, there are *no* cases of a CWP holder being a school shooter.**
- 4. Police officers who properly follow standard operating procedures will not have any problems out of CWP holders when the police eventually arrive at the crime scene.**
- 5. Virginia Tech was proud of helping kill a bill similar to H. 3964 because being a "gun free" zone made them feel safe. But, feeling safer and being safer are two very different things.**
- 6. The federal "Gun Free School Zones Act" allows SC CWP holders to legally carry in SC schools. For the safety of our children and the benefit of society, SC law should mirror the federal law on school carry.**

Below are some points that explain why H. 3964 is a good bill that would help provide a safer environment for our children, and therefore should be enacted into law as soon as possible.

Point 1. The courts have consistently ruled *the police have NO legal duty to protect us!* While the police may have good intentions, the only real duty to protect others comes from a moral

duty to do so. This moral duty to protect is not only vested in police officers, it is invested in each of us by our creator. To take the ability to perform this God given duty away from law abiding CWP holders is morally wrong.

Point 2. Prior to 1996, SC CWP holders were allowed to carry in schools, and did so without incident. The Associated Press reports that over 25% of states currently allow CWP holders to carry in schools, and they were not able to point to any problems at schools related to CWP holders.

The best available research shows liberal CWP laws work to lower violent crime rates for all people, not just CWP holders. The following facts show a completely different picture than the fear mongers want you to see:

"The benefits of concealed handguns are not limited to those who use them in self-defense. ... Citizens who have no intention of ever carrying concealed handguns in a sense get a 'free ride' from the crime-fighting efforts of their fellow citizens. However, the 'halo' effect created by these laws is apparently not limited to people who share the characteristics of those who carry the guns. The most obvious example is the drop in murders of children following the adoption of nondiscretionary laws. ***Arming older people not only may provide direct protection to these children, but also causes criminals to leave the area.***" John R. Lott, Jr., More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws 161 (2nd ed., 2000).

Years ago, Israel was suffering from terrorist attacks upon their schools and children. Israel decided to allow armed citizens to congregate at schools. Armed grandparents would go to schools and play games to pass the time while the children attended classes. The terrorist attacks upon their schools stopped.

It is unreasonable to believe historically law abiding people who step onto school property will suddenly turn into deranged murderers or reckless shooters of our children. This is especially true when one considers the only CWP holders who would have any reason to be at the schools would be the parents and teachers of the children. It is logically inconsistent to entrust our children to these teachers, but still believe these teachers would kill our children. It is especially absurd to think this of the parents.

Point 3. The fear mongers are at their worst when they start crying about how CWP holders with concealed sidearms are a threat to the safety of our children. There are absolutely NO cases of CWP holders shooting any children at schools. But, there are a number of documented cases of private citizens using firearms to stop an active school shooter from killing even more innocent children.

In Pearl, MS, assistant principal Joel Myrick heard gun shots at his school and ran to his car to grab a handgun. Myrick returned to find the shooter trying to make his escape from one school so as to go to another school to kill even more children. Myrick used his handgun to force the killer to surrender. The police showed up 5 minutes later.

In Edinboro, PA, James Strand - the business owner of where a school dance was being held - heard gun shots at the dance and grabbed his shotgun. Strand caught the active shooter just as the

shooter had finished reloading his gun. Strand pointed his shotgun at the shooter and held him until the police arrived 11 minutes later.

In Grundy, VA, two students - Tracy Bridges and Mikael Gross - at the Appalachian School of Law heard gun shots at their school and ran to their respective vehicles and grabbed their own handguns. They confronted the active shooter from different angles and demanded he drop his weapon. Once the shooter dropped his gun, another student jumped on the shooter. The police arrived some time later, and well after the shooting had stopped.

Lets compare these cases of private citizens quickly stopping an active school shooter with the cases where the safety of our children is dependent upon waiting for the police to arrive and handle things.

In Littleton, CO, two school shooters were allowed to continue shooting innocent children even after the police arrived at the scene until the police finally decided to enter the school hours later after the shooting had already stopped. One teacher died from loss of blood, but it is thought he would have survived if the police had acted sooner. Thankfully, many police have now decided to change their tactics to emphasize a more immediate response to an active shooter than was used at Columbine High School.

At Virginia Tech, the campus was crawling with police due to a double murder on campus that same morning. But, even with the campus crawling with police looking for a murderer on the loose, it still took the police 5 minutes to get to the scene of the active school shooting. During those long five minutes, the school shooter fired off 170 rounds, hitting his dead victims 100 times - many at point blank range, and killing 32 students. Those totals do not include the wounded. The shooter had to reload his guns multiple times. Then, the shooter took his own life. If there had been even one CWP holder there, things could well have turned out differently.

It should be obvious to any thinking person that the best way to protect our children from an active school shooter is to stop the shooter as quickly as possible. While there is no way to stop a deranged person from starting to shoot people at a school, we do have the means to stop the shooter before the body count gets bigger and bigger. The best means we have to protect our children is to allow SC CWP holders - the mothers, fathers, and teachers of our children - to carry at schools.

Some people will argue we should leave the job of protecting our children to the "professionals." But, when minutes can mean the difference between life and death as shown by what happened at Virginia Tech, waiting minutes for even the best trained police to arrive is never as good for our children's safety as already having an armed protector at the scene.

It would be laughable, if it were not so tragic, when the fear mongers claim that allowing CWP holders to possess self-defense sidearms at schools will harm more children than letting deranged killers have free reign at the schools. The fear mongers would have you think it is better to keep existing laws to prevent that which has never happened - i.e., CWP holders shooting our children, than to pass laws to allow our children to be protected by the mothers, fathers, and teachers of our children in a way that has already happened many times.

The fear mongers somehow believe that a deranged killer who is willing to violate God's law against killing people, will refrain from doing so because of a man made law that says guns are not allowed at schools. This is unreasonable, illogical, and should be considered criminally negligent.

Point 4. The fear mongers argue that allowing CWP holders on school grounds will make things impossibly difficult for the police when the police arrive at the scene. They claim they fear coming upon an armed conflict with 15 armed people and not being able to distinguish the good guys from the bad guys. Such fears are completely unfounded.

First, by the time the police arrived in each of the documented cases of armed citizens saving our children, the active shooter had already been subdued and under the control of the armed citizen. The police only had to take care of the paperwork and write the reports. The real work of stopping the killer had already been done before the police arrived.

Second, proper police use of force dictates that the responding officer immediately identify himself as a police officer and then tell the people at the scene what he wants them to do. So, when the police officer arrives, all he need do is say: "I am the police. Drop your guns." The good guys will drop their guns. The bad guys will not. That should not be too difficult for a properly trained police officer to do to distinguish the good guys from the bad guys. If that is too much of a problem for police, then the solution is to increase police training. The solution is not to allow more of our children to die in an active school shooting situation simply because the police are too unskilled to follow proper procedures.

Third, the claims that there will be 10 to 15 armed people at the scene of a school shooting (as claimed by Rep. Todd Rutherford on CNN Headline News with Erica Hill) is absolutely ridiculous! Only one percent of the people in South Carolina have a CWP. Anyone under the age of 21 years old can not even obtain a CWP in South Carolina, which - for all practical purposes - means that only seniors, graduate students, professors, or mature people who started college later in life will have a CWP. So, even in a large lecture class of 100 students, it would be extremely unusual to have more than 1 or 2 CWP holders in the class. In fact, the chances of having 10 armed students there would be less than 3/1000ths of 1%, and the chances of having 15 armed students there would be about 1 in 667 million.

It is amazing how the fear mongers can get so worked up over a scenario that has never happened and is a statistical non occurrence, while completely ignoring the real life scenario of a maniac shooting up an unarmed classroom even though it has happened more than once. Then, the fear mongers want us to believe they have the high moral ground and are credible when they wring their hands about their bizarre scenarios and propose more gun control even as they turn a blind eye to the things that actually have happened.

Point 5. In 2006, Virginia Tech lobbied the Virginia General Assembly and asked them to kill HB 1572 - a bill to allow CWP holders to carry on school grounds. Virginia Tech did then just as some of our South Carolina colleges are now doing today. Virginia Tech was successful in getting the General Assembly to kill the bill in subcommittee. Afterwards, Virginia Tech spokesperson Larry Hincker said, "I'm sure the university community is appreciative of the General Assembly's actions because this will help parents, students, faculty and visitors *feel safe on our campus.*"

Our children deserve better than to be sacrificed on the altar of political correctness. Our children deserve to *be safe*, not simply *feel safe*. H. 3964 will actually help make our schools safer for our children, not just make them feel safer.

Point 6. The federal "Gun Free School Zones Act" allows South Carolina CWP holders to carry in schools. The federal Centers for Disease Control found there was insufficient evidence to show any gun control law has ever saved any lives at all. Yet, South Carolina law makes CWP carry in schools a felony even though there is no evidence to support the value of that law. On the other hand, there is statistically significant evidence to show the South Carolina law is flawed and that such a law could turn a South Carolina school into the next Virginia Tech.

Dr. John Lott studied the impact of liberal concealed carry laws upon crime, especially multiple victim public shootings as occur in school shootings. Here is what Dr. Lott wrote:

"What can stop these attacks? ... [W]hile arrest and conviction rates, prison sentences, and the death penalty reduce murders generally, they have no significant effect on public shootings. There is a simple reason for this: Those who commit these crimes usually die in the attack. ... The normal penalties simply do not apply.

... ***The best way to prevent these attacks might therefore be to limit the carnage they can cause if they do attack. We find only one policy that effectively accomplishes this: the passage of right-to-carry laws.***

When different states passed right-to-carry laws during the nineteen years we studied, the number of multiple-victim public shootings declined by a whopping 84 percent. Deaths from all these shootings plummeted by 90 percent, and injuries by 82 percent. ... ***The very few attacks that still occur ... tend to occur in particular places where concealed handguns are forbidden, such as schools.***

...

Concealed-handgun laws also have an important advantage over uniformed police, for would-be attackers can aim their initial assault at a single officer, or alternatively wait until he leaves the area. With concealed carrying by ordinary citizens, it is not known who is armed until the criminal actually attacks.

Despite all the debate about criminals behaving irrationally, reducing their ability to accomplish their warped goals reduces their willingness to attack. ... Unfortunately, without concealed carry, ordinary citizens are sitting ducks, waiting to be victimized." John R. Lott, Jr., More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun Control Laws 195-197 (2nd ed., 2000).

H. 3964 is not about kids carrying guns on campus because kids can not possess handguns. H. 3964 is about allowing parents of students to possess a handgun when caring for their children at school. It is about teachers being prepared to defend our children if a deranged killer seeks notoriety for shooting up a school as has happened many times already. It is about older female students taking night classes and being able to walk to their cars in dark parking lots without becoming easy victims of rapists.

The parents who have taken the time and effort to get a CWP should not be turned into felons for dropping off or picking up their children at schools and colleges. It is unreasonable to force

parents of college students to travel unarmed while driving hours each way to drop off or retrieve their children from some distant college, oft times in the dark of night. It is unreasonable to force a parent to travel unarmed while going to and from work in a crime ridden area just because the parent also has to drop off or pick up their child from school. It is unreasonable to turn classic soccer moms into felons for possessing a handgun on school property when they suddenly find that the team's away game is at a school instead of a public field.

If we truly loved our children, we would not create safe havens for the killers of our children. Instead, we would recognize there is a difference between gang bangers and CWP holders. We would recognize that CWP holders are the mothers and fathers of these school children. We would recognize that letting mothers, fathers, and teachers save our children from a mass murderer is more important than hopefully punishing the murderer later.

The fear mongers have predicted "Wild West" shootouts and blood in the streets every time a liberal gun law has been proposed. Not once have these fear mongers been right. It is now time to do what should have been done years ago - simply reject such lies, fantasies, and deceptions and do the right thing to enhance our children's safety.

The most effective way to save our children is to allow the proven good guys - SC CWP holders - the right to carry on school grounds just as federal law already does. We must repeal the criminal safe haven law.

H. 3964 is well grounded in principle, logic, and fact, and deserves to be enacted into law. GrassRoots GunRights asks that you pass this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R.D. Butler". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Robert D. Butler, J.D.
Vice President
GrassRoots GunRights SC