

GrassRoots GunRights

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May 9, 2007

The Honorable Scott Talley
South Carolina House of Representatives
P.O. Box 11867
Columbia, SC 29211

RE: H. 3964

Dear Representative Talley:

As we start to look at the merits of H. 3964, we need to remember that what we should be most interested in doing is protecting the children. Being pro gun or anti gun should not be our concern. Rather, we need to remain focused on being pro children.

We understand the issue of allowing guns in schools is an emotion laden issue. But, the best laws are those laws calmly and deliberately considered, and firmly grounded in principle, logic, and fact. The worst laws are those passed in the heat of emotion and based upon fears, erroneous information, and deceptions. So, lets look at the facts.

First, the federal Centers for Disease Control found there is insufficient evidence to show that gun control laws have saved any lives at all in the United States. Thus, to claim that a "gun free" school zone law will save lives is simply an assumption unsupported by fact. When dealing with life and death issues regarding our children, our children deserve better laws than ones based upon unsubstantiated assumptions.

Second, concealed weapon permit (CWP) holders have proven themselves to be the good guys. Wherever more liberal CWP laws have been passed, violent crime rates have dropped. This benefits all the people in the state, not just the CWP holders who bear all of the costs. There is no evidence to support the wild claims - which are made every time a more liberal gun law is proposed - that we will have "Wild West shootouts" or "blood running in the streets" if a more liberal gun law is passed. Such unsubstantiated fears have never proven true and our laws should not cater to such fears. CWP holders are simply not a threat to our children.

Third, the best available research shows that virtually all mass public shootings occur where concealed weapon permit (CWP) holders are prohibited from carrying their sidearms. This is not surprising since most mass murderers never expect to survive their deadly rampage. These mass murderers want to make a political or social statement by killing as many people as they can before being stopped. An armed good guy - either a law enforcement officer or other armed citizen - is the only thing standing between the mass murderer and his goal of a bunch of dead bodies. Therefore, a mass murderer seeks to avoid encountering armed good guys until after he has finished amassing

the highest body count he can get.

Researchers John Lott and William Landes, then at Yale and the University of Chicago, respectively, studied multiple victim public shootings. Examining data from 1976 to 1995, they discovered the number of shootings in states which adopted concealed handgun laws declined by 84%, deaths plummeted by 90% and injuries by 82.5%. Crediting the reductions to deterrence (even suicidal maniacs avoid victims who shoot back), Lott and Landes called their findings “dramatic,” concluding: “[T]he only policy factor to have a consistently significant influence on multiple victim public shootings is the passage of concealed handgun laws.”

Fourth, as proven by school shootings over the last few years, our schools are not really “gun free.” One need only look at Virginia Tech; Columbine; Pearl, MS; and Virginia’s Appalachian School of Law to see that laws banning guns do not stop mass murderers from bringing guns to schools. The bad guys still bring guns to school to harm our children because the bad guys do not obey the law. There is no rational basis to believe that a person intent upon violating God’s law against murder will somehow stop merely because of a man made law against carrying a gun on school grounds.

When gun control advocates peddle their “gun free school zone” scheme as a solution, they avoid mentioning details of three other school shootings where armed intervention saved lives without additional shots fired. In Pearl, Mississippi, assistant principal Joel Myrick stopped triple murderer Luke Woodham by using a handgun retrieved from his car. In Edinboro, Pennsylvania, the 14-year-old who killed a teacher at an off-campus dance was captured by shotgun-wielding James Strand. And, at Virginia’s Appalachian School of Law, student Tracy Bridges used his pistol to stop and detain murderer Peter Odighizuwa.

Contrast the three school shootings above with the recent Virginia Tech shootings and you will see why H. 3964 is needed. At Virginia Tech, the police were called immediately, and it only took them five minutes to get to the site of the shooting. That is an excellent response time. But, the killer was still able to fire 170 rounds, killing 32 people after shooting them over 100 times. And that does not count the wounded. Then, the killer shot himself. The only thing that could have stopped this carnage sooner was if there had been a CWP holder with his sidearm in the school.

Mass murderers make rational decisions to avoid armed good guys who could stop them. Police officers are easily identified by their uniforms, and thus easily avoided. But, CWP holders are not easily identified, and thus are not easily avoided. And, even more importantly, there are approximately 300% more CWP holders in South Carolina than there are police officers. Therefore, the best way for a mass murderer to avoid a legally armed good guy capable of stopping the carnage is to choose a place where legally armed good guys are legally prohibited from carrying a sidearm. This is why legislatively created “gun free” zones are actually the most dangerous places to be when a mass murderer seeks to make a statement.

Law enforcement officers - about 25% of the legally armed good guys in SC - carry guns in schools to protect our children, and our children are not being shot by them. It is only non law enforcement armed good guys - about 75% of the legally armed good guys in SC - who are banned from possessing guns at school to protect our children because these good guys obey the law even

when the law is wrong. Just as we can see there is a difference between law enforcement officers and gang bangers, we need to recognize there is a difference between CWP holders and gang bangers. Not everyone with a gun is a bad guy.

Fifth, the federal “Gun Free School Zone Act” allows South Carolina CWP holders to carry in schools because SC CWP holders have proven themselves to be the good guys by passing both FBI and SLED background checks. Additionally, SLED requires a SC CWP holder to have a squeaky clean record, even speeding tickets are sufficient cause for denying a person a CWP.

Unfortunately, SC law denies SC CWP holders the right to carry on school grounds, even if simply dropping off or picking up their children at school. What this does is create safe havens for those who would prey upon our children. These mass murderers usually keep killing others until they either run out of ammunition or the police or someone else shoots them. The threat of punishment afterwards is of absolutely no deterrent value when dealing with a person intent upon killing as many people as he can until he dies. The only effective deterrent is an armed good guy.

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 and fathers save their children from a mass murderer is more important than hopefully punishing the murderer later. 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.

Section 1 of H. 3964 expressly provides that CWP holders can legally carry on school grounds, but Section 2 expressly denies that same right. This creates ambiguity where none need exist. The last sentence of Section 2 of H. 3964 reads “Nothing contained herein may be construed to alter or affect the provisions of Sections 10-11-320, 16-23-420, 16-23-430, 16-23-465, 44-23-1080, 44-52-165, 50-9-830, and 51-3-145.” References to Sections 16-23-420 and 16-23-430 should be deleted so as to avoid any conflicts with Section 1 and thereby create ambiguity over whether such sections of law are applicable to CWP holders. Also, Section 50-9-830 was repealed effective July 1, 1996, and thus should also be deleted.

H. 3964 is well grounded in principle, logic, and fact, and deserves to be enacted into law after adding just a couple of amendments necessary to perfect the bill. GrassRoots GunRights asks that you pass this bill after amending it as proposed above.

Sincerely,



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