

Testimony: HB 1588  
Thursday February 6, 2025 2:30 PM &  
Testimony: HB 1365  
Friday February 7, 2025 8:30 AM

My name is Lloyd Halvorson, I am the VP for Academic and Student Affairs at Lake Region State College in Devils Lake. In addition to my role as the VP, I serve as the college's Chief of Police. I have been a licensed peace officer in the State of ND for 36 years. After a decade with the Bismarck Police Department, I joined Lake Region State College in 2002 as the police academy director and law enforcement educator. In addition, I have been a ND POST approved firearms instructor for the past 21 years.

I am here to testify in opposition to that portion of HB 1365 and 1588 that removes from the NDCC "A *publicly owned or operated building*" from the places where firearms are prohibited. I testify today on behalf of Lake Region State College and communicate to this committee the college's official position on both HB 1365 and 1588.

Removing "A *publicly owned or operated building*" from this statute would create an environment where it would be perfectly legal for almost anyone to possess a rifle, including a semi-automatic "assault style" rifle, shotgun, and/or handgun open carry (completely visible) and/or concealed (completely hidden) in all campus buildings, including residence halls, classrooms, hallways, meeting rooms, student unions, dining centers, auditoriums, and sports arenas; and in all circumstances on campus such as athletic events and graduation ceremonies. This would all be in "constitutional carry" environment, where no permit is required.

Being able to openly carry firearms on our campus in this way is highly problematic. From a protection standpoint under the law today: If someone emerged into the doorway of a crowded college event (think basketball game) carrying an assault rifle or a handgun, a police officer on scene would know what to do. The officer would not need to wait for this individual to point the weapon at a person, the crowd, or to open fire, as the possession of the firearm is unlawful in and of itself.

If either bill becomes law, the officer would not be able to proactively respond (engage/detain) as the law would make it legally permissible to bring an assault rifle into this event. It would even be legal to walk around with a handgun in your hand.

Do we want to require our police officers to wait until someone opens fire or otherwise shows a readiness to kill or terrorize before they are allowed to engage?

Even if this person isn't planning an attack, perhaps they are just being a knucklehead walking around our campus with an assault rifle or visible handgun, considering what we have taught people about active shooter response, it would create a seriously alarming situation.

Someone asked me recently if people should be able to carry firearms to defend themselves from an attacker or an active shooter? My response was, yes, I am not worried about safety when it comes to law-abiding residents with a concealed carry permit who go about their business armed and unnoticed every day.

I do worry about introducing guns into our campus environment.

- I worry about an intoxicated student who decides to show their guns to others in the resident halls. At some point there will be unintentional discharge that leaves one student dead and one likely going to jail; or
- A dispute settled with words or with fists today may be settled with a gun tomorrow; or
- Currently, a student in the grips of a mental health episode who is thinking suicide is the only answer to their immediate problem may not kill themselves because the “tool” is not readily available; but if the gun is easily accessible in their dorm room, the situation ends in death instead.
- Should President Darling be forced to allow teachers to wear a handgun, fully in view while teaching in the classroom?
- What about a teacher, afraid to turn her back to write on the smart board because she is terrified by the young man in her class who has an assault rifle hanging at the ready?

If “*publicly owned or operated buildings*” are removed, the distinction between lawful behavior and seriously alarming behavior will become very subjective. Here is a scenario: if two dozen people call 911 in a panic because they are watching two people approaching Memorial Union at UND with assault rifles; what does the dispatcher say to them? “Sounds like a perfectly legal situation to me...call back if they start shooting”? Sounds absolutely absurd, but the caller would only be describing a perfectly legal scenario.

I believe the general public, my public, your public, his/her public, would conclude that this situation just described is simply not ok. The new permissions created by this bill will make our ND world less inviting and more intimidating.

I sincerely hope you will give the provision removing “*A publicly owned or operated building*” more scrutiny and give (at a minimum) the open carry of visible firearms renewed deliberation and reconsideration. Again, if the scenario described earlier of dozens of callers to 911 reporting those men approaching Memorial Union with assault rifles causes you concern, this proposed edit to 62.1-02-05 should also cause you concern.

It is my professional opinion, as a higher education and law enforcement leader for 3 1/2 decades, that a majority of North Dakotans, gun-owning and law-abiding North Dakotans, would without hesitation, reject the new reality created here.

I encourage this committee to give this legislation a unanimous “Do Not Pass” recommendation, at least so far as college campuses are concerned. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

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