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Devin Walz
Collin College

Anh Doan

Cathy Tran

Loraina Galarza

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Devin Walz

Dr. Potts

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Should the State of Texas Allow Public Universities and Colleges to
Permit Guns on Campuses?

In May 2013, the Texas House of Representatives approved a bill that would decriminalize the carrying of firearms on college campuses across Texas. Sixteen states introduced legislation in 2012 to allow concealed carry on campus – all of which failed to pass (MacLaggan). The Texas Legislature did not meet in 2012, but during the 2011 legislative session a campus carry proposal failed to pass. Recent incidents involving school violence have helped gain support for a campus carry bill, bringing attention back to the overall debate on gun control. For many, these incidents call for an ease of existing firearm regulations to allow concealed carry on campuses. They believe this bill would provide protection to students who would otherwise be vulnerable in dangerous situations. However, others view these incidents as a need to tighten current restrictions to keep guns off campuses. These individuals argue that, if passed, the bill would increase incidents of gun violence on campuses. As a result of conflicting arguments, a question arises: Should the State of Texas allow public universities and colleges to permit guns on campus?

The key social problem the bill is attempting to address is the prevalence of gun violence on college campuses and universities. This problem can be divided into two separate issues: mass shootings and firearm related injuries and deaths. Over the past three decades, Americans have witnessed a number of high profile campus shootings that have torn apart communities and

left the nation in mourning. One of the worst campus shootings occurred on April 16, 2007 at Virginia Tech, resulting in the death of 33 people, including the gunman. This shooting came to be known as the Virginia Tech Massacre and was deemed the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history, surpassing the 1966 Texas Tower sniping (“33 Dead”). The effort to allow concealed handgun license holders to bring their handguns onto college campuses turned into a national issue after Virginia Tech. Supporters of campus carry claimed they wanted to give students the chance to shoot back. Over the years, campus carry bills have lacked the necessary legislative support to become law, proving too controversial for many legislatures to side with. It wasn’t until the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in December 2012 that the nation witnessed a tragedy equivalent to Virginia Tech, bringing the campus carry debate to the forefront of political discussion and causing many legislatures to finally make a decision on how to best address the problem.

Statistically, the likelihood of a mass shooting occurring on a college campus is relatively low; leaving the bulk of the gun violence problem to firearm related injuries and deaths. Many students find themselves experiencing a significant amount of stress that is associated with college life. Some of these stressors include a challenging workload, studying long, hard hours, and dealing with social issues such as balancing schoolwork and friends. The affects of such stress can result in mental health issues for students. According to Amy Thompson, Ph.D, an expert in firearm injury prevention, states “data on college students’ health risk behaviors have found increased risks for alcohol and substance abuse as well as depression and suicidal thoughts. The aforementioned risk behaviors place college students at increased risk for engaging in both unintentional (eg, accidental discharge) and intentional injuries (eg, suicides and homicides) with firearms” (Thompson 248). In addition, a national study of college students

by the Centers for Disease Control showed that firearm use was “substantially and significantly” the most common method of suicide for males, accounting for as many suicides (52%) as all other methods combined (Schwartz). In addition, the prevalence of crime on college campuses has brought concern to the campus carry debate. According to The National Crime Victimization Survey, firearms are used in 9% of all violent crimes, 7.5% of assaults, and 31% of robberies against college students (Baum and Klaus 5). Proponents of campus carry point to statistics like this as support for their claim. They believe that students should be able to protect themselves from campus crime, however, opponents also point to these statistics to prove that firearms are dangerous and used to commit crimes and by allowing students to carry weapons on campus, the likelihood of crime occurring increases as well.

Significance

The significance of the issues relates directly to the safety of college campuses and universities. Safety is a natural concern for students, parents and faculty. In 2012, there was an estimated 21.6 million students attending American colleges and universities (Hussar and Bailey). However, every year it seems like another tragedy affects a college campus in America. Not only are parents starting to worry about the safety of their children but it is the job of the colleges and universities to keep their students safe. It has also become an important issue for lawmakers to decide which steps are needed to battle this violence.

Definitions

In order to fully understand the history surrounding the controversy and the arguments made by stakeholders, a few key terms must first be defined. First, an active shooter is “an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearm(s) and there is no pattern or method to their

selection of victims” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security). Throughout the paper, “active shooter” situations will be referenced in the context of college campuses and universities. Also, the term Concealed Handgun License (CHL) refers to the permit required in order to carry a concealed handgun in public places. The policy being discussed requires students to have a CHL in order to carry a concealed handgun on campus. This term will be used interchangeably with the term, concealed carry, which often refers to a weapon, particularly a handgun, which is carried in public in a concealed manner. “Requirements for permits to carry a concealed weapon vary by state, but they usually require a minimum age, completion of a safety course, and prohibit felons or those found mentally unstable or guilty of certain crimes to obtain a permit, among other requirements” (“Concealed Weapons”).

Limitations

For reasons of space and relevance, this paper will focus primarily on the issues and arguments directly related to college campuses and universities. Although much debate exists over gun violence in elementary schools and high schools, the policy in question deals solely with college campuses and universities throughout the State of Texas. However, in the history section of the paper I will briefly mention the issue of school shootings, most of which involve high schools. Although these shootings did not occur on college campuses, they did provide the momentum needed for legislatures to take a stance on policies such as the one that will be discussed in this paper. Additionally, this paper will limit discussion to public universities and colleges since the policy in question does not include private universities.

History and Background

Discussion of the gun control debate often begins with the philosophical and political foundation of the United States. During the American Revolution, a number of weapons,

including muskets, rifles, and cannons, were used to successfully defeat the British and establish a new form of government responsible to the will of the people. Prior to the American Revolution, the ideological movement known as the Enlightenment swept across colonial America promoting concepts of freedom and reason. One prominent Enlightenment philosopher, John Locke, believed in inalienable natural rights such as the right to life, liberty, and property. According to Issac Tichenor, an American lawyer and politician active in the 18th century, Locke believed “man was endowed with natural rights given to us by the creator, and man maintained these rights in the state of nature” (Tichenor 7). The Founding Fathers drew heavily upon the ideas of Locke when writing the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. In response to years of colonial rule, the Founding Fathers wanted to guarantee citizens their natural rights, thus forming the first ten amendments to the Constitution. Included in this list of amendments is the Second Amendment right of the people to keep and bear arms.

When the Second Amendment was drafted, the need for private gun ownership was never questioned (Froman). The Founding Fathers considered firearms essential to protecting personal liberty, both as a means of opposing foreign threats and as a system of checks and balances. It was not until the 1930s that gun control advocates started to organize. The National Firearms Act of 1934 (NFA) was the first piece of federal legislation concerning the regulation of firearms. The purpose of the act was to tax certain weapons out of circulation and was specifically “designed to make it difficult to obtain types of firearms perceived to be especially lethal or to be chosen weapons of ‘gangsters,’ most notably machine guns and short-barreled long guns” (“Gun Control...”). Four years later, President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved the Federal Firearms Act of 1938, which placed the first limitations on selling ordinary firearms. This act was aimed at firearm dealers who sold and shipped firearms through interstate or foreign commerce. Firearm

sellers were required to obtain a Federal Firearms License and maintain records of guns sales (Carter 193).

When World War II broke out in 1939, firearms regulations were put off due to the perceived need for an armed populous until the radical movements of the 1960s divided the country politically and socially. Opposition to American involvement in the Vietnam War provoked a counterculture of youth across the United States as students became increasingly involved in a number of social and political movements. College enrollment reached an all-time high as Baby Boomers reached maturity and campuses became centers of protests and anti-war demonstrations. Student activism grew to include many demographic groups drawing national and international attention to civil rights issues. During this period, a number of political and civil rights figures were assassinated including John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. This spurred the passage of the Gun Control Act of 1968 (GCA) as a part of Johnson's Great Society. This act restricted the sale of firearms "for the purpose of keeping firearms out of the hands of those not legally entitled to possess them because of age, criminal background, or incompetence" ("History..."). As stated in the GCA, "the purpose of federal firearm regulation is to assist federal, state, and local law enforcement in the ongoing effort to reduce crime and violence" (Parnell 39).

The gun control debate became a national issue for most Americans in the 1980s. In December 1980, the world mourned the loss of beloved musician John Lennon, who was shot and killed by Mark Chapman outside his New York City apartment. In March 1981, only a few months after Lennon's death, John Hinckley opened fire on President Ronald Reagan outside the Washington Hilton Motel in an assassination attempt. President Reagan, Press Secretary James Brady, and two Secret Service agents were wounded in the crossfire. After witnessing two high-

profile shootings in a matter of months, most Americans were in favor of stricter gun regulations. However, President Reagan did not bring about any significant gun control laws during his administration.

During the 1990s, schools became the issue of debate for gun control legislation. The Gun-Free School Zones Act was enacted as a part of the Crime Control Act of 1990. The text of the act reads, “The Gun-Free School Zones Act (GFSZA) prohibits any person from knowingly possessing a firearm that has moved in or otherwise affects interstate or foreign commerce at a place the individual knows, or has reasonable cause to believe, is a school zone” (“Federal Law”). Nevertheless, a considerable amount of school shootings occurred throughout the 1990s. One shooting central to the gun debate occurred in 1999, when two high school seniors, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, led a shooting rampage through the corridors of Columbine High School in the suburban town of Littleton, Colorado. The attack left 15 dead, including the students responsible for the attack (“Columbine High School”). Columbine was the most serious incident out of a cluster of seven school shootings in the late 1990s. The shootings not only included a large number of fatalities, but also occurred over a brief period of time (Kleck 1449), leaving many people divided on what measures should be taken to address the problem.

Until Virginia Tech, campus carry was not an issue for most colleges and universities. This can be attributed to the fact that the rash of shootings which had occurred previously were mostly targeted at high schools. Most states have taken a stance on concealed carry weapon laws since then and are actively pushing legislation regarding the issue. Currently, there are 22 states that ban concealed carry on college campuses, Texas being one of them. However, Texas legislatures are considering policies regarding campus carry due to recent shootings which have hit close to home. The University of Texas at Austin experienced an “active shooter” situation in

2010 when a student fired multiple shots around campus before committing suicide in the Perry-Castañeda Library. A more recent shooting at Lone Star College in Houston resulted in three people suffering gunshot wounds after an argument erupted. On a national level, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting prompted President Barack Obama to push for gun control legislation to expand background checks for gun buyers. President Obama received a major political blow after the bill was defeated in the Senate in April 2013.

Texas has a deep history of pro gun culture that runs nearly 200 years deep. Guns played a significant role in the history of Texas including its independence from Mexico and in the Mexican-American War. Fast-forward to the state of Texas now and you'll notice thriving metropolises with diverse populations, however, not much has changed regarding the state's love of guns. No permit is necessary for the purchase of firearms as long as you are 18 years of age and a resident of the state. No state license is required for the possession of a firearm and the carrying of a concealed handgun is allowed if the person has the appropriate permit ("Texas Gun Laws"). Federal attempts at gun control are met with opposition in the State of Texas and while the rest of the nation is pushing for gun control legislation, Texas is looking to do the opposite.

The piece of legislation I will be discussing has taken a different approach to address the issue of safety in schools. HB 972, also known as the Campus Carry Bill, would essentially decriminalize campus concealed carry on Texas college campuses. The bill was passed in the Texas House of Representatives in May 2013 and was sent to the Texas Senate for review. The Texas Legislative Session ended, leaving the bill stalled in the Senate. However, Governor Rick Perry has the option to call a special session to vote on the bill. Campus carry bills have been proposed in the past but lacked key political support. The possibility that this bill could be made into law has caused many to take a side in the debate.

Proponents and Their Values

General stakeholders supporting HB 972 include student advocacy groups, grassroots organizations, gun advocates and lobbyists and most Republican legislatures. These groups generally lean to the right politically and hold conservative views regarding government interference and regulation. They believe in a literal interpretation of the Constitution, specifically the Second Amendment right of the people to keep and bear arms. Some specific stakeholders include State Rep. Allen Fletcher and State Sen. Brian Birdwell. Rep. Allen Fletcher, author of the bill, strongly supports the right of licensed individuals to carry handguns on college campuses and universities. “The fact is that these are adults who are trained and licensed to carry a concealed weapon for protection,” Rep. Fletcher said. “We must afford citizens the right to protect themselves” (Fletcher). Sen. Brian Birdwell filed SB 182, also known as the Campus Personal Protection Act, the companion bill to Fletcher’s HB 972. The bill is a more specific version of HB 972 and is currently pending in the Senate Criminal Justice Committee. Specific stakeholder groups include the National Rifle Association (NRA) and Students for Concealed Carry (SCC). The NRA remains one of the most influential lobbying groups in Washington with a membership base of over five million. They lobby for “promoting gun ownership as a civil liberty protected by the Second Amendment to the Constitution” (Wilson). Brent Gardner, NRA Grassroots Coordinator, states that “the NRA is not encouraging students to carry concealed weapons on campus, but thinks those with permits should be able to do so” (Branscome). Stated on the SCC website, Students for Concealed Carry is “a student-run, national, non-partisan organization which advocated for legal concealed carry on college campuses in the United States as an effective means of self-defense” (“Students”). The group is known for its active role promoting campus carry legislation and raising awareness of the issue

by distributing information on campus crime statistics, holding debates with gun control advocates, and running licensing workshops (Wiseman).

The issues surrounding the proponents' stance on the Campus Carry Bill include liberty and freedom, security and protection, and campus crimes taking place on and near college campuses. First, liberty and freedom are issues that proponents argue strongly for. Specifically, this issue involves the use of the Second Amendment for the proponents' base of argumentation. Proponents argue that the current ban of guns on college campuses in Texas is a violation of the Second Amendment right to keep and bear arms, specifically for reasons of self-defense. The second issue at hand involves the security and protection of college students. Proponents argue that college campuses should have the ability to decide whether students and faculty can use firearms as measures for self-defense. Finally, the proponents find that the issue of crime on and near college campuses is of concern. The proponents argue that students and faculty who have successfully obtained their Concealed Handgun License and carry on campus will, in turn, decrease the occurrences of firearm related crimes. The proponents are concerned with these issues due to the prevalence of past and recent firearm related incidents.

The first argument proponents make is that the Second Amendment guarantees the right of individuals to keep and bear arms, therefore, making laws which forbid citizens from owning or carrying a firearm unconstitutional. Proponents have been known to use the Second Amendment as one of their primary sources for argumentation. The Second Amendment does not specifically state the freedom to carry a concealed handgun, however, several U.S. Supreme Court decisions, such as *D.C. v. Heller (2008)*, have struck down handgun bans declaring them a violation of the Second Amendment. By arguing that prohibiting guns on campus is a violation of the Second Amendment, proponents believe that they will be able to decriminalize campus

carry. Additionally, “most controversial gun control laws, and the ones most likely to face constitutional challenges are those that purportedly infringe on the self-defense aspect of the right. The plaintiff in *Heller* brought suit under the sole contention that the District’s firearm ban inhibited his right to self-protection” (Desmond). The Supreme Court agreed, stating that individual self-defense “was the central component of the right itself” (“District of Columbia”). Based off this case, proponents believe they have a chance of overturning the campus carry ban if they argue that that such a ban prevents the right to bear arms for self-protection.

The second argument proponents’ make is that concealed handgun licensees are responsible, law-abiding citizens who should be able to defend themselves against criminals. They argue that criminals are going to carry weapons whether it is legal or not, so why not allow those who are properly trained to arm themselves against these individuals? A study conducted by Gary Kleck and Marc Gertz of Northwestern University School of Law examined one-on-one situations involving a single offender and defender. According to Kleck and Gertz, the top three actions recorded by the defenders included showing the gun (75.7%), verbally acknowledging the gun (57.6%), and pointing the gun at the offender (49.8%) (185). As a result, when violence was directed at the defender, nearly 46.8% of offenders did not threaten or attack the defender because the defender introduced the presence of their gun (Kleck and Gertz 185). Proponents find this evidence to be supportive of their argument because it suggests the protective benefits of handguns as a means of self-defense. Proponents also claim that if campus carry were allowed, criminals would be unable to tell whether a potential victim is able to defend his/herself until they attack, making it less attractive for criminals to commit crimes (Lott Jr). Not only would those who are carrying benefit from the deterrence, but those who would never consider carrying a gun would benefit as well.

Lastly, the third argument that the proponents make is that the rate of firearm related crimes on and near campus will decrease with the passing of the Campus Carry Bill. Additionally, this argument considers the possibility of increased college safety on campuses and its surrounding areas by allowing students and faculty to carry concealed guns. In a study conducted by William E. Sturdevant, a professional engineering statistician, he analyzed the arrest rate of Texas CHL holders in comparison to the arrest rate of the entire population of Texas (Sturdevant). Sturdevant found that “Texans licensed to carry a gun are much less violent than Texans who are not” (21). Furthermore, “the average Texan is 5.3 times more likely to be arrested for the violent crimes of murder, rape, robbery, and assault than the average CHL holder” (Sturdevant). Sturdevant continued by stating “[the Texas Concealed Handgun Law’s] intent is to allow law-abiding Texans to ‘prevent crime’ through ‘lawful defense of himself [or herself]’” (5). Proponents find that this evidence supports their claims by providing data that exhibits positive and rational behaviors associated with CHL holders and law-abiding citizens.

The proposed plans and actions that the proponents are aiming towards primarily include the use of political action. As mentioned earlier, Allen Fletcher is the author of HB 972, often referred to as the Campus Carry Bill. The Campus Carry Bill is one of the proponents’ political strategies to bring about their proposed policy. In addition to Fletcher’s Campus Carry Bill, Texas State Senator Brian Birdwell has also written a companion bill. Sen. Birdwell authored SB 182, also known as the Campus Personal Protection Act, which “allows private universities to opt-in for campus carry, and allows public universities to opt-out for campus carry” (“Campus Personal Protection Act”). [The proponents find that these two pieces of legislation both support and compliment one another.] Furthermore, the proponents are working primarily by lobbying the Texas State Legislature. Specifically, the NRA’s lobbying group, the Institute for Legislative

Action (ILA), has publicly announced its support for both Representative Fletcher and Senator Birdwell (“Texas”). According to their mission statement, the NRA-ILA states that “[with the combined] strong grassroots efforts of NRA members and NRA-affiliated state associations and local gun clubs, the Institute has worked vigorously to pass pro-gun reform legislation at the state level” (“About NRA-ILA”). Through the use of state legislature and the backing of the NRA-ILA, the proponents have identified some methods to bring about their proposed policy.

Opponents and Their Values

Opponents of HB 927 generally include most college campuses and universities, various organizations against gun violence, gun safety advocates and most Democratic legislatures. These groups share the same basic belief that guns on campus would only lead to an escalation in gun violence. In fact, these individuals usually support legislation for tighter gun regulations. Specific opponents of the bill include University of Texas at Austin President Bill Powers, The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence and advocacy groups such as Texas Gun Sense. In the past, Bill Powers has publicly announced his opposition towards concealed carry legislation. Earlier this year, Powers wrote a letter on behalf of the American Association of Universities asking the government to take more action on gun violence (Roush). Opponents of the bill value the safety of the students, faculty, and staff of the universities and believe that such a bill would only create an environment for gun violence to foster.

The issues surrounding the opponent’s stance on the Campus Carry Bill include alternative safety measures for campuses and students, personal safety for college students, and increased crime rates on and near college campuses. One of the main issues that the opponents are concerned with is the overall safety of college campuses and its students. The opponents have considered alternative methods that can be used to keep colleges and students safe without using

firearms. The second issue takes into account the personal safety of college students. The opponents argue that an individual's personal safety is decreased as a result of the potential number of students who may be carrying a firearm. Lastly, the opponents find that the issue of crime on and near college campuses is of concern. The opponents argue that increased crime rates will occur surrounding college campuses and its communities. The opponents are concerned about these issues due to the prevalence of past and recent firearm related incidents.

The first argument that the opponents make is that there are alternative measures to maintain the safety of college campuses and its students without using firearms. To begin, the opponents argue that college campuses and universities are already safe. Dr. Katrina Baum and Patsy Klaus, Bureau of Justice Statisticians who have studied violence against college students, recorded the occurrences of violent acts against college students from 1995 to 2002 and found that "93% of crimes occurred off campus" (1). Opponents find this evidence to support their claim by noting the existing safety of college campuses. Additionally, in 2007 the U.S. Department of Education found that out of a sample of 1,378 colleges and universities, nearly "98% to 99% reported no homicides" over a course of three years (Hemphill 3-4). Lastly, another study involving 249 murder cases found that 183 occurred off campus, 37 on campus, and 29 at a remote location (Hemphill 7). Based on these results, the opponents have suggested that "campuses tend to be less dangerous than off-campus locations (Hemphill 7).

The second argument that opponents make is that the safety of college campuses will be put at risk if the Campus Carry Bill is passed, more specifically they believe that there will be a decrease in student safety due to the unknown number of students carrying concealed handguns. Charles C. Branas et al. is part of the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Firearm, and Injury Center at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. In their study, Branas et

al. analyzed the link between gun possession and gun assault and found that “individuals who were in possession of a gun were 4.46 times more likely to be shot in an assault than those not in possession (2037). Hemenway, Azrael, and Miller are affiliated with the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Harvard School of Public Health. Here they conducted two national random surveys “to determine the relative incidence of gun victimization versus self defense gun use” (Hemenway et al.). The results showed that “guns are used to threaten and intimidate far more often than they are used in self defense” (Hemenway et al.). Lastly, the proponents argue that students who carry a concealed handgun are at a higher risk of suicide. According to Miller and Hemenway, “one third to four fifths of all suicide attempts are impulsive” (989). The opponents argue that individuals who carry a concealed handgun may act on this impulsivity.

Lastly, the third argument that opponents make is that CHL holders lack adequate training and experience to responsibly carry a gun on college campuses. Although CHL holders are required to meet the application’s requirements, pass a background check, and complete training, opponents argue that CHL holders still pose a threat to the public. For example, the Violence Policy Center, a non-profit, research and public educator on firearm violence, noted that “from 1996 to 2000, Texas concealed handgun license holders were arrested for weapon-related offenses at a rate 81 percent higher than that of the general population of Texas, aged 21 and older” (5). Additionally, opponents argue the fact that even properly trained police officers shoot with roughly 34 percent accuracy (Baker) leading us to logically believe that a student with one hour of required hands-on training is not going to come anywhere close the experience a police officer has.

The proposed plans and actions that the opponents are aiming towards primarily include the use of social action. As outlined throughout the opponent's issues and arguments, it is evident that the opponents are primarily concerned about the students on college campuses. In addition, the opponents continue to bring out their proposed policy by using education as a primary tool. In closing, policies at the national level are being proposed for stricter gun control regulations such as more thorough background checks, bans on various assault weapons and limiting the magazine capacity.

Critical Analysis

Having completed the presentation the arguments of both supporters and opponents of the Campus Carry Bill, this paper will now analyze each issue to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each side's arguments. One argument proponents make about the Campus Carry Bill is that the Second Amendment guarantees the right of individuals to keep and bear arms, therefore, making laws which forbid citizens from owning or carrying a firearm unconstitutional. This is the primary argument used by proponents of the Campus Carry Bill and for several decades has proven successful in a court of law. One landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, *D.C. v. Heller (2008)*, struck down handgun bans in Washington D.C., declaring them a violation of the Second Amendment. Another major victory for gun rights supporters was decided in *McDonald v. Chicago (2010)*, when the Supreme Court affirmed the individual right to own guns, making it the first time the Supreme Court ruled that the provisions of the Second Amendment extended to the states (Garrett). The basic logic behind the arguments posed by gun advocates' is that the most effective way to overturn bans on guns is to challenge them on Second Amendment grounds, specifically related to self-defense. In the broader debate of gun

control, this argument has proven successful in the highest court of law so proponents are applying this argument in an attempt to decriminalize current campus carry laws in Texas.

The second argument proponents' make is that concealed handgun licensees are responsible, law-abiding citizens who should be able to defend themselves against criminals. The basic logic behind their argument is that criminals are going to carry weapons whether it is legal or not, so why not allow properly trained citizens to arm themselves against these individuals? Proponents rely on a number of authoritative sources, studies, and data that reaffirms the benefits of campus carry including studies which show that the presence of a gun deters attacks from criminals, and reports provided by independent experts like the National Academy of Sciences, a provider of research to the U.S. government for 150 years, which show that there is no evidence supporting the argument by opponents that 'right to carry' laws lead to an increase in violent crime. This is the most credible argument that proponents use because it is backed by a surplus of data and studies from various authoritative sources. However, there is just as much evidence from the opponents' sources to counter arguments made by proponents'.

The third argument proponents' make is that the rate of crimes on campuses will decrease with the passing of the Campus Carry Bill. This argument seems to be made in response to recent high-profile shootings which have attracted the attention of the nation. After incidents like the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, the same question arises in the minds of Americans: What is the best way to solve this seemingly epidemic issue? While the number of regulations on firearms has increased over the years, citizens still seem to witness a tragedy at schools every few years. Proponents' of campus carry have benefited from these situations by offering a solution, one that they argue could prevent incidents such as Virginia Tech from ever occurring again. The main weakness to this claim is that the argument is an appeal to emotion. It is easy to

sway the views of others during times of emotional distress and it is easy to use this emotion to invoke sympathy. Proponents have created this scenario in the heads of citizens that situations like this can occur at anytime and if armed, you could be the person to stop the next Virginia Tech. However, this is not the case for most colleges who have seen an overall decrease in campus crime over the years. In addition, there are federal studies which show that out of a sample of over 1,000 colleges and universities in the United States, nearly 98% to 99% reported no homicides over a course of three years (Hemphill 3-4). Nonetheless, this appeal to emotion has brought the campus carry issue to the forefront of the gun debate and has caused many people to consider campus carry as an option, a solution which had little support prior to Virginia Tech. Shortly after the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Conn., the NRA gained 100,000 new members in just 18 days. In the six months following the tragedy the NRA gained an estimated 500,000 members, an increase of more than 12 percent (Kessler). While there is little logical reasoning to back their argument, proponents have gained a significant foothold in the campus carry debate with this emotional appeal.

Now that the proponents' arguments have been thoroughly analyzed, this paper will now determine the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments presented by opponents to the Campus Carry Bill. The first argument opponents make is that there are alternative measures that maintain safety on college campuses without using guns. Such measures include Taser guns, defense sprays like pepper spray, and self-defense training classes that opponents claim are just as effective as guns in preventing crime. There is no evidence that states such measures are as effective, however, police officers rely on devices such as pepper spray and Tasers to subdue criminals so there is logical reasoning behind their claim. Opponents believe these alternatives present lower risks for students, faculty, and staff in comparison to the high incidence of firearm

related injuries and deaths that occur each day. This argument is a more moderate approach to addressing the problem of crime on campus and because this argument takes a somewhat middle ground in the campus carry debate, those individuals who may not have a strong preference for either side might be attracted to the side of opponents.

The second argument opponents make is that the safety of college campuses will be put at risk if the Campus Carry Bill is passed, more specifically they believe that there will be a decrease in student safety. This claim is supported by a number of authoritative studies such as nationally recognized journals that publish empirical research findings, and data compiled by world-class universities like John Hopkins relating to the general gun debate. A good amount of this data shows that owning a gun puts a citizen at a higher risk of homicide or suicide. Some studies even show that the method most used by suicide victims is firearms. Opponents also address the mental health aspect of the overall problem, noting that many students suffer from depression and other mental disorders. Combined with the stress that comes with college, students are at a higher risk for developing addictions to drugs or alcohol and the availability of guns to students would only put students at an increased risk of accidental or intentional firearm related injuries and deaths. One strength of this argument is that there are decades of evidence that support the general argument in the overall gun debate. Over the years, the controversy surrounding the gun debate has led to an extensive amount of research to be devoted to building up evidence for the opponents side. This support can be applied to the settings of college campuses, creating an even stronger argument for opponents. Some weaknesses to the argument are that there are only a few college and universities that allow campus carry so there is no hard evidence that suggests that guns would prove detrimental to the safety of college campuses and universities.

The third argument opponents' make is that CHL holders lack adequate training and experience to responsibly carry a gun on college campuses. Currently, citizens are required to meet the application's specific requirements, pass a background check, and complete a 10 to 16 hour class that requires a demonstration of handgun proficiency in order to obtain a CHL. However, opponents believe this is not enough experience for a person to responsibly carry in public places, including schools. The strengths to this argument include several key statistics, like the fact that even a properly trained New York police officer shoots with roughly 34 percent accuracy (Baker). Another piece of data researched by public educators on firearm violence shows that "from 1996 to 2000, Texas concealed handgun license holders were arrested for weapon-related offenses at a rate of 81 percent higher than that of the general population of Texas, aged 21 and older" (Violence Policy Center). However, there are many reasons why a CHL holder may be arrested such as carrying at a post office or carrying in a state that does not recognize a Texas permit. These reasons do not necessarily make a CHL holder unqualified to carry. Weaknesses to the argument include the fact that many states don't even require classroom time to obtain a CHL. Utah is one of those states that only requires applicants' to meet certain requirements and turn in the application along with a fee. Comparing the requirements from both states shows that Texas CHL holders require both the experience in the classroom and a test of shooting proficiency, much more than is asked of in Utah, a state that allows CHL holders to carry on campus.

Moral Reasoning

To evaluate the controversy surrounding the Campus Carry Bill thoroughly, this paper will now examine the moral reasoning of each side, analyzing the values, obligations, consequences, and the normative principles apparent in their arguments. Because the primary

argument for proponents revolves around the Second Amendment, it is clear that they value the protection of individual liberties. Proponents such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) lobby for promoting gun ownership as a civil liberty protected by the Second Amendment to the Constitution. In addition, the organization established the NRA Civil Rights Defense Fund, which “provides legal and financial assistance to selected individuals and organizations defending their right to keep and bear arms” (“About Us”). Furthermore, proponents value the security of students, faculty, and staff of Texas colleges and universities. The Campus Carry Bill would allow concealed handgun licensees to carry handguns on campuses including students, faculty, and staff of the institutions. State Sen. Brian Birdwell, sponsor of the bill and author of SB 182, the companion bill to HB 972, states “this bill takes steps towards allowing the same trained adults who carry on a day-to-day basis to protect themselves on colleges campuses” (Chammah).

From the perspective of proponents, the State of Texas has an obligation to the students, faculty, and staff of college campuses and universities. This obligation includes the protection of the liberty to keep and bear arms as well as the right to security through self-defense, which is reflected in the values discussed above. Proponents argue for a literal interpretation of the Second Amendment, making the obligation, in their eyes, a formal one. Opponents of the Campus Carry Bill would argue that the text of the Second Amendment is ambiguous and its interpretation does not apply to modern-day society. Nonetheless, proponents believe it is the duty of the State of Texas to ensure that this right is guaranteed and not infringed upon with laws that prohibit citizens from carrying on college campuses.

The consequences motivating supporters of the Campus Carry Bill include both positive and negative outcomes. First, if the legislation makes it through committee into law, students,

faculty, and staff would be able to protect themselves against the more serious crimes which campuses face such as rape, sexual assault, aggravated assault, and aggravated robbery. Additionally, these individuals would be armed with a form of protection in active shooter situations and possibly be able to stop the shooter, saving lives as a result. Another positive outcome in the eyes of proponents would be the influence of the law in the overall gun debate. Recent events including the Sandy Hook Elementary Shooting and the movie theater shooting in Aurora, Colorado have reignited the gun debate, resulting in both sides of the debate to push for legislation. If made into law, this piece of legislation would be a victory for gun advocates and push the debate in their favor. However, there is also the possibility that this piece of legislation could die in committee with would be considered a negative outcome for proponents’.

The applicable normative principles for the proponents’ side include the Principle of Liberty and J.S. Mill’s Principle of Non-Interference. The Principle of Liberty, which states that each person should enjoy the maximum liberty compatible with the same for all others, supports doing away with current laws prohibiting citizens from carrying on college campuses. The Second Amendment guarantees the right to keep and bear arms and current laws that make concealed carry on campuses a crime prevent citizens from exercising their Second Amendment right to the fullest degree of freedom. J.S. Mill’s Principle of Non-Interference justifies the punishment of an individual who is causing harm to him/her self or others. Proponents’ believe it is permissible to use a concealed handgun to stop a criminal from hurting his/her self or others.

Critics of the Campus Carry Bill also have values, obligations, consequences, and normative principles that shape their moral framework. Like proponents, opponents of the Campus Carry Bill value the security of students, faculty, and staff of Texas colleges and universities. Their main reason for opposing the Campus Carry Bill is because they believe

having guns on college campuses would lead to a decrease in student safety. For opponents, introducing guns into an already safe environment puts everyone at risk for intentional or unintentional firearm related injuries and deaths. They also believe that guns would only lead to more campus crime, making students vulnerable to armed attackers who may be carrying a weapon only because they believe students may be armed. There is also the threat of criminals stealing handguns out of students' vehicles or dorm rooms leaving those individuals armed and dangerous to others. For opponents, the overall safety of college campuses would suffer as a result of the Campus Carry Bill.

Like proponents, opponents of the Campus Carry Bill believe the State of Texas has an obligation to the students, faculty, and staff of college campuses and universities. However, opponents have different views on what this obligation means in relation to the issues and arguments being debated. To opponents, this obligation is an informal one in the sense that they believe the State of Texas owes citizens the right to feel safe in public places such as college campuses. Opponents such as Texas Gun Sense support the individual right of citizens to keep and bear arms, however, they believe this right should be limited so that those who choose not to carry guns everywhere may safely exercise their rights to worship, attend school, and live their lives in peace. They also believe that campus safety is best provided by campus administrators and police, and any legislation forcing educational institutions to allow guns in classrooms is not the responsibility of the State of Texas.

The outcome opponents ultimately wish for is the bill to die in committee, leaving current laws that prohibit campus carry intact. This outcome is likely considering the fact that various campus carry bills have been proposed in the past but have failed to make it through both the House and Senate committees. The consequences of taking a position against campus carry could

include both positive and negative consequences. Positive consequences could include a general decline in campus crime, however, it would be hard to attribute this decline specifically to a lack of guns on campus. Crime data could be compared against colleges who permit guns on campuses and those that prohibit guns, but there is a very small sample of colleges which allow guns and many factors to take into consideration when comparing data such as school size, demographics, geographic location, etc. Negative consequences could include an increase in campus crime, more specifically, the incidence of school shootings that could provoke lawmakers to pass a campus carry bill regardless. However, this is a very unlikely outcome since there is little to no data that suggests guns are beneficial to safety in the college environment and lawmakers generally don't take a stance on issues that are highly controversial and could hurt their chances of reelection.

One normative principle that applies to opponents of the Campus Carry Bill includes the Principle of Direct Utilitarianism. This principle, which states that an act is morally right if it produces the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people over the long term, supports opponents' stance on the issue. In relation to the principle, opponents believe prohibiting guns on campus produces the greatest amount of good because, statistically, college campuses are one of the safest places for a student to be. A vast majority of crimes against college students occur off campus and there is evidence suggesting that merely owning a firearm puts citizens at a higher risk of homicide or suicide. Additionally, the incidence of mass shootings at colleges is rare and opponents consider a campus carry bill disproportionate to the actual need for such legislation. Thus, in the eyes of opponents their stance on the issue is one that helps, or in this case, protects the greatest amount of people in the long term by continuing to keep college campuses a safe environment.

After reviewing all of the arguments and evidence both sides have presented about the Campus Carry Bill, I have decided to side with opponents and reject campus carry. However, I do believe in addition that colleges should 1) expand the mental health services available to students and (2) take an active role promoting safety on campus. I ultimately decided to side with opponents' after interviewing my opponent, John Woods, a graduate from Virginia Tech who had been directly effected by the Virginia Tech shooting. Prior to his interview I had immersed myself in gun culture by attending gun shows, shooting at firing ranges, and attending a CHL class. I had personally concluded that I would feel safer knowing I had a form of protection on me. However, after talking to John I realized that just because I felt like I could trust myself with a gun doesn't mean I necessarily trusted others with a gun. You hear about tragedies like Virginia Tech on the news time and time again, but it isn't everyday that you talk to someone who was a part of the tragedy. He told me that his girlfriend and many others were killed that day, but there was no way that having a gun would've saved anyone's life. I could've thrown out some statistics or national reports claiming the opposite, that possibly someone could've intervened and stopped the shooter, but who am I to make these claims? John went through one of the worst experiences that anyone could go through and survived. He's dedicated his life to preventing guns on campus. I realized that it's the experience that is going to cause someone to take one side or another. I can only assume and base my decision off of studies and reports, but John has experienced firsthand what I discuss in my paper and if he tells me that there is no way a gun could've helped in his situation, then I'm going to believe him. I also took into consideration what John said regarding the mental health services on colleges when making my recommendations.

The first measure is aimed to target those individuals suffering from mental disorders, drug/alcohol problems, and even relationship problems. Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech shooter, had a number of incidents occur prior to the shooting which should have been clear warning signs of Cho's instability. One professor stated she had removed Cho from her class because of his bizarre behavior. Cho was also reported to have been involved in a number of stalking incidents, many of which resulted in warnings from campus police. It wasn't until after the tragedy that Cho was diagnosed with selective mutism, a psychiatric disorder characterized by the inability to speak in given situations or to specific people. Cho's medical records also revealed that he had failed to comply with court orders to seek outpatient treatment, but was never disciplined as a result. What these recommendations aim to do is keep a close eye on individuals like Seung-Hui Cho through counseling, required follow-ups, and oversight on cases that display more serious, underlying problems. I also believe colleges should bring awareness to the mental health issue by holding campus events, inviting speakers to talk to students, and providing additional resources such as anonymous hotlines where students can reach out to others for help.

The second part of my recommendations involves advocating safety on campus. Attending to little things such as making sure all areas of the campus are well lit at night or making sure there are university police patrolling the grounds at all times creates a safer environment for students, faculty, and staff. Other measures include practicing emergency drills so that everyone is prepared to effectively handle a situation if one was to occur. I also believe colleges should offer self-defense classes so that students can be able to properly defend themselves against crimes on or off campus.

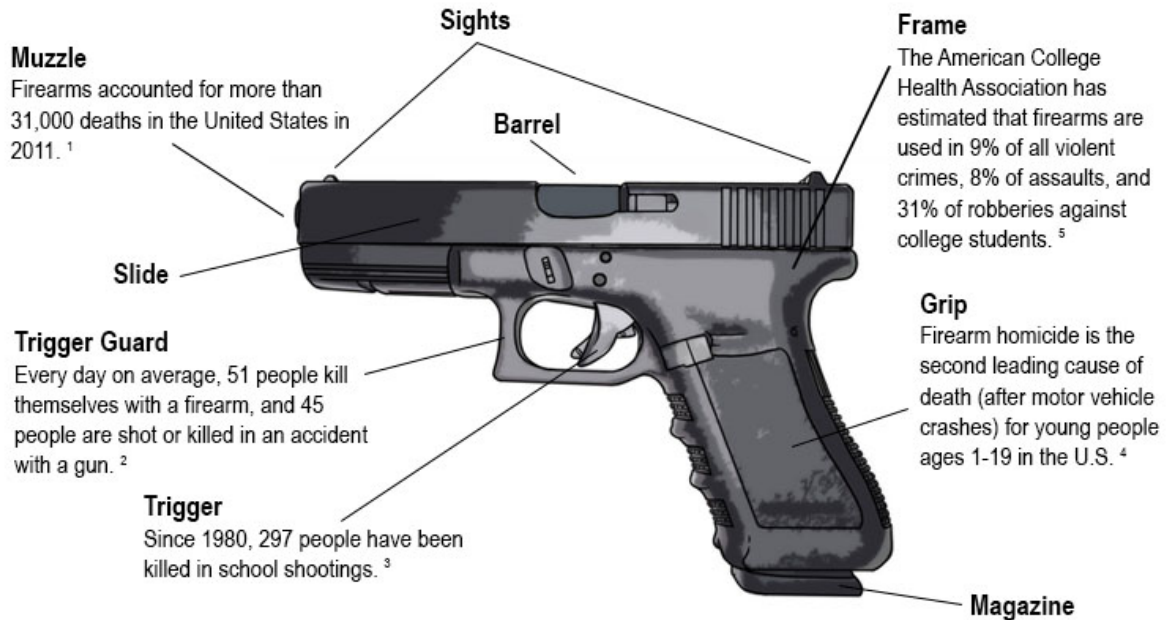
Just like opponents, my argument includes both strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include the fact that this is a less controversial solution compared to the solutions of proponents'. This solution would not require any significant changes to be made even if my recommendations are taken into consideration, but even then it would only include a tweaking of current counseling practices to include a closer eye on individuals with mental problems or drug/alcohol problems. Setting up events over campus safety and creating a self-defense class would require a minimal amount of work and would help ensure that students are aware of how to defend themselves in certain situations. Weaknesses to this argument include those related to my recommendations regarding certain laws that may prohibit medical professionals from keeping such a close eye on their patients. Patients can also not be forced against their will to talk to a medical professional unless they are deemed a danger to themselves or others, however by that point it may be too late for help.

People who would argue against my proposed solution might say that more extreme measures are needed to address the social problem. They might also argue that there is not enough evidence or support to prove that implementing such measures would prove beneficial. I might amend my proposed recommendations to include a system that specifically collects data related to campus crime and crime committed by students with mental disorders so that colleges would be able to determine whether this solution is actually helping to decrease the amount of crime and determine how many of those crimes involved someone with a mental disorder/addiction. If enough evidence gets collected, let's say, over a period of 5 years then the college could make some claims on whether or not this method is effective in reducing campus crime and set an example for other colleges to go by.

Appendix

Appendix A: Gun Handout

Loading Up On Gun Facts



¹ Wadman, Meredith. "The Gun Fighter." *Nature* 946.7446 (2013): 412. *MasterFILE Premier*. Web. 10 June 2013.

² *Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence*. Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, 2013. Web. 4 June 2013.

³ Kirk, Chris. "Sandy Hook: A Chart of all 137 Fatal School Shootings Since 1980." *Slate*. N.p., 19 Dec. 2012. Web. 10 June 2013.

⁴ *Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence*. Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, 2013. Web. 4 June 2013.

⁵ Thompson, Amy, James H. Price, Adam J. Mrdjenovich, and Jagdish Khubchandani. "Reducing Firearm-Related Violence on College Campuses - Police Chiefs' Perceptions and Practices." *Journal of American College Health* 58.3 (2009): 247. *MasterFILE Premier*. Web. 4 June 2013.

Appendix B: Proponent Interview Questions

Proponent: Michael Cargill

Owner of Central Texas Gun Works

DPS & NRA Certified CHL Instructor

- Questions:
- 1) Where do you stand on the issue of safety regarding campus shootings?
 - 2) What is your personal experience with firearms? Do you own any guns? If so, what do you use them for?
 - 3) Do you believe that the training required for a CHL is enough for a college student to effectively and responsibly carry a concealed handgun on campus?
 - 4) What is your stance on concealed carry on college campuses?
 - 5) What is your opinion on gun-free zones? Do you think they are effective at deterring crime?
 - 6) If House Bill 972 (Campus Carry Bill) was passed, do you think Texas colleges would be safer or less safe against campus crime?

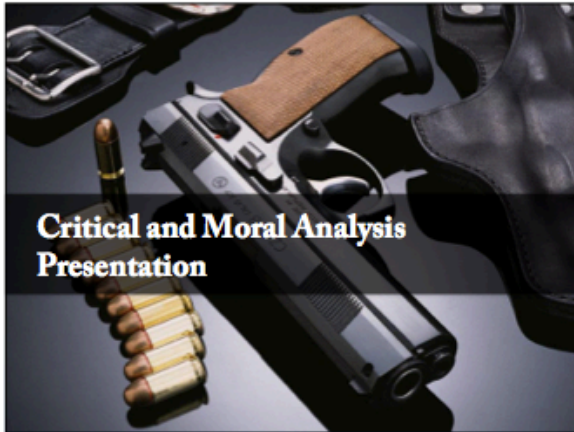
Appendix C: Opponent Interview Questions

Opponent: John Woods

Texas Gun Sense

- Questions:
- 1) Could you give me a basic overview of your organization?
 - 2) How many members are involved?
 - 3) How is your organization actively taking part in ensuring guns remain off campuses?
 - 4) In your opinion, what is the best way to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff on college campuses?
 - 5) What is your personal experience handling firearms? Do you own any guns?
 - 6) If a Campus Carry Bill were to pass in the State of Texas what do you think would be the biggest impact or the potential consequences?
 - 7) What were your views on guns before the Virginia Tech shooting?

Appendix D: Powerpoint Slides from Critical and Moral Analysis Presentation



Normative Question

Should the State of Texas allow public universities and colleges to permit guns on campuses?

The Issue of Safety

- Campus Crime
- Mass Shootings

Parties Involved

Proponents	Opponents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gun advocates/lobbyists • Student advocacy groups • Grassroots organizations • Most Republican legislatures • State Rep. Allen Fletcher • State Sen. Brian Birdwell 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most college campuses and universities • UT at Austin President Bill Powers • Various organizations against gun violence • Gun control advocates • Most Democrat legislatures

Arguments

Proponents	Criminals are less likely to attack someone that they believe might be armed. The deterrent effect of concealed carry benefits the individual carrying a handgun as well as the general public.
Opponents	"Allowing untrained, or under-trained, persons to carry loaded hidden handguns in public puts people at risk of being killed or injured, intentionally and unintentionally." -The Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence

Moral Analysis

<div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Values Security Liberty Human Rights Freedom </div> <div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Obligation To students, faculty, and staff </div> <div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 5px;"> Consequences Obtain: The right of every student to self defense </div>	<div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Values Security Order Peace </div> <div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> Obligation To students, faculty, and staff </div> <div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 5px;"> Consequences Avoid: Guns on campuses </div>
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Critical Analysis

Will allowing concealed carry reduce the amount of crime on college campuses?

Critical Analysis

Proponents	Opponents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arguments are not supported with enough authoritative evidence, mostly assumptions• Proponents mostly concerned with "right" to self-defense rather than the benefits• Studies which counter the argument of deterrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arguments supported with evidence/studies• Emotional appeal from unrelated shootings• Provide alternatives as a means of self-defense

Appendix E: Powerpoint Slides from Field Presentation



NORMATIVE QUESTION

Should the State of Texas allow public universities and colleges to permit guns on campuses?

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

- CHL class
- 8:00 am – 7:00 pm
- Firearm safety
- Firearm laws
- Restrictions & punishments
- Firearm training & test

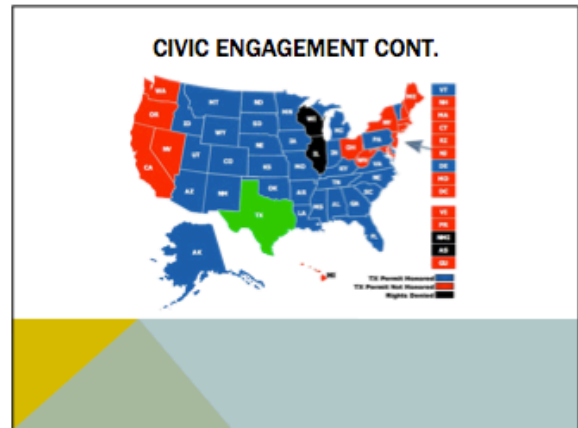
-FELONY NOTICE-

The ~~licensed~~ or ~~unlicensed~~ possession of a weapon on these premises is a felony with a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment and a fine not to exceed \$10,000

HANDGUNS PROHIBITED

PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.06, PENAL CODE (PREPARED BY HOLDER OF A LICENSE TO CARRY A CONCEALED HANDGUN) A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER 41A, CHAPTER 41, GOVERNMENT CODE, CONVEYED HANDGUN LAWS MAY NOT ENTER THE PROPERTY WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN.

CONFORME A LA SECCION 30.06 DEL CODIGO PENAL (PREPARED POR EL TITULAR DE UN LICENCIO PARA PORTAR UN ARMA DE FUEGO CONCEALADA) UN PERSONA LICENCIADO DEBAJO DEL SUBCAPITULO 41A, DEL CAPITULO 41, DEL CODIGO DE GOBIERNO, LEY DE TEXAS, NO DEBE ENTRAR A LA PROPIEDAD PORTANDO UN ARMA DE FUEGO.



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

- Why a CHL class?
- How did the class effect me?
 - Students were responsible adults
 - Self-defense & protection
 - Use of force
 - DO NOT shoot!
- What did I realize?
 - Still uncomfortable with handling
 - Not enough hours to be proficient

The State of Texas requires

10 hours
Must attend the class & receive an entry in attendance register

300 hours
All classroom instruction, and 100 hours must consist of the class & an instructor

INTERVIEWS

Proponent	Opponent
<p>Michael Cargill - U.S. Army - CHL instructor - Central Texas Gun Works</p>	<p>John Woods - Virginia Tech graduate - Girlfriend killed in shooting - Texas Gun Sense</p>



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – PROPONENT

1. What is your personal experience with firearms?
2. Do you believe that the training required for a CHL is enough for a college student to effectively and responsibly carry a concealed handgun on campus?
3. What is your opinion on gun-free zones? Do you think they are effective at deterring crime?
4. How many students take your class a week?
5. How do you advocate for campus carry?
6. Why do you advocate for campus carry?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – OPPONENT

1. Could you give me a basic overview of your organization?
2. What is your personal experience with firearms?
3. What is your opinion on gun-free zones?
4. What were your views on guns before the Virginia Tech shooting?
5. In your opinion, what is the best way to ensure the safety of students, faculty, and staff on college campuses?
6. Do you believe that the training required for a CHL is enough for a college student to effectively and responsibly carry a concealed handgun on campus?

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Proponent	Opponent
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demeanor: friendly, outgoing - Support: personal experience - Effect: everyone has a story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demeanor: quiet, somber - Support: personal experience - Effect: ultimately side with opponents

FINAL SOLUTION

- Sided with opponents
- Expand mental health services
- Take active role promoting safety
- Critical analysis
 - Not enough is being done
- Moral Analysis
 - Obligation of college to students
 - Consequences both good and bad
 - Principle of Direct Utilitarianism

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