
OPPOSE SF 67 & 137 – REPEAL GUN FREE ZONES AND PREEMPTION AMENDMENTS - 2021

- Wyoming’s seven community colleges currently serve more than 26,000 students from all 23 counties in Wyoming, as well as from other states and countries around the world. Ensuring their safety on all our campuses is a priority paralleled only by our goal to deliver the world-class education our students desire and deserve. In short, our students’ educational goals cannot be achieved if our students are not, or do not feel, safe on our campuses. These twin goals must, and clearly do, operate together.
- While our organization recognizes and respects the importance of our nation’s Second Amendment rights, **WACCT believes SF 67 and SF 137 strip the colleges’ ability to be responsible in balancing those rights with their obligation to keep students safe.** Given the heightened emotion and confined spaces that characterize many athletic events, the introduction of concealed firearms into that environment is bad policy that could increase the potential threat of serious violence. With not-always mature, passionate youths at rival sporting events and in sometimes tumultuous relations in our residence halls and apartments, weapons on campus would elevate risks to much higher levels. Introducing firearms into an environment already fraught with emotion is unwise.
- **In other states where guns have been allowed on campus, colleges and universities have spent millions of dollars to beef up security.** In difficult economic times when Wyoming’s community colleges have already made considerable expenditure reductions, the colleges or the state which would likely be asked to help fund these measures, cannot afford to absorb such costs.
- **SF 67 and SF 137 are a clear effort to remove local control from elected decision makers and administrators who are charged with ensuring the safety of their students.** In Wyoming, we tend to reject such one-size-fits all policymaking when it occurs at the federal level. We should not allow the same kind of policymaking at the state level. There are no doubt school districts and community colleges that would debate this issue internally and reach different conclusions about whether and how to allow concealed weapons on their campuses. Those decisions must continue to be in the hands of locally elected officials and administrators who are entrusted with the governance and administration of their institutions.
- **Community Colleges are complex environments – removal of the local decision to determine where gun free zones should exist further complicates those learning and community environments:**
 - The colleges have a huge variety of events on their campuses – ranging from a political rally to a sporting event. They have residence halls, day cares and high-tech laboratories.
 - College students are under stressful environments and often engage in risky behavior such as binge drinking and drug abuse. Students discipline hearings are also stressful environments.
 - There are increased cases of mental illness and depression and the risk of suicide for that age group is one of the highest in the country, here in Wyoming.
 - Having guns on campus could impact free speech in the classroom.
- **Background Facts on Conceal Carry Across the Nation**
 - **16 states prohibit concealed carry on campus by law.** This means that persons knowingly carrying a concealed deadly weapon, even with a permit, are subject to fines and imprisonment. These states are California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, and Wyoming.

- **23 states permit colleges to make their own rules against campus carry** but refrain from criminal penalties. Consequently, penalties are limited to academic sanctions such as suspension or expulsion (for students) or termination (for employees and faculty). These states are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.
- **12 states expressly permit concealed carry on campus**, including Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana (just passed in 2021 leg session), Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Wisconsin.