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Tennessee Representative Curry Todd's Bad Behavior Indicative of Personal Weakness, Not Legislative Error

Wild Assumptions, Scandal-Seeking Obscures Value of Legislation

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COMMENTARY | When Tennessee State Representative Curry Todd, Jr. was cited for DUI and possession of a loaded weapon while intoxicated, he was breaking the law, but not necessarily the one he sponsored. The gun was loaded, but it was in his car, wedged between the seats. He was not brandishing or even touching it.

Todd was the chief sponsor of the Tennessee law allowing handgun permit holders to carry their guns into bars, providing they did not consume alcohol while on the premises. His argument was that permit holders were smart enough to know not to [mix guns and alcohol](#). Circumstantial evidence would suggest he is not among the intelligent group of permit holders.

This does not mean that the law he sponsored is faulty. In other states, statistics suggest that violent crime in bars and restaurants has [actually decreased](#) after the enactment of this same kind of legislation. A version of this law is in effect in most of the country, as 42 states allow concealed or open carry of guns into bars. According to David Rittgers of the Cato Institute, this fact correlates with a measurable decrease in violent crimes in bars and restaurants.

So we return to our own erring native son, Rep. Todd. Was he, in fact, consuming alcohol in a bar? And was he carrying the gun on his person at the time? I haven't been able to find that very important information. Apparently [Jeff Woods of the Nashville Scene](#) jumped to these conclusions.

As Woods put it, "we can only assume Todd, 63, had been drinking in a restaurant or bar. Did he bring his handgun with him? Drinking with your gun-that's something the

lawmaker told us repeatedly during the guns-in-bars debate that no responsible handgun owner ever would do."

And just where did you get this information, Mr. Woods? The fact of the matter is that Rep. Todd broke the law, but his offenses were driving under the influence and possession of a loaded gun while intoxicated. Neither of these offenses are directly related to the "guns in bars" legislation. It is equally plausible that Mr. Todd had a few drinks in a bar without his gun (who patiently waited for him in his car) and then proceeded to make the bad choice to drive under the influence.

Because of who he is, it is assumed that he carried the gun with him into a bar. It is my considered opinion that this incident, while showing Rep. Todd to be reprehensible in his personal behavior, does not discredit the legislation he sponsored. In fact, bad behavior like this on the part of an elected official tends to result in investigative opening of many unrelated cans of worms, like Todd's ties to the [alcohol industry](#).

How is supporting alcohol increasing the potential for gun violence in bars? It seems the public and pundits are quick to throw our public officials to the wolves when they exhibit bad behavior. Does a DUI make a regular person automatically unreliable in all aspects of life? WREG Memphis Channel 3 commentator Otis Sanford [opined](#): "Any elected official should be held to a higher standard, everybody knows that. ... This certainly raises some serious questions about his behavior, his demeanor."

If Sanford and others who hold this opinion of elected officials are waiting for them to adhere to a higher moral standard, then they are living in a dream world. Legislators are humans, and they act like humans. But they are treated like subhumans when they make human mistakes. Judge him for the crimes he did commit, not the ones everyone seems eager to commit him to, and judge the legislation on its own merits, not on the personal failings of its sponsor.