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## Texans now free to concealed carry guns without getting a permit

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**AUSTIN, Texas** — Texans are no longer required to obtain a state license to carry a concealed firearm in public, setting up an increase in the number of people who choose to skip the training process, according to gun experts.

The bill that cut back the requirements, H.B. 1927, known as the constitutional carry law, took effect Wednesday. One Texas Republican touted it as doing away with an “artificial barrier” to citizens' constitutional right to bear arms.

Before Sept. 1, Texas residents who purchased a gun and wished to carry it in a concealed manner had to obtain a state license, even though they were legally permitted to carry a gun openly in public without a license.

“Through Aug. 31, if you wanted to carry a handgun in Texas, you had to get a background check, you had to get a training in safety and laws, and you had to determine some proficiency,” said Gyl Switzer, executive director for Texas Gun Sense.

Texas is the 21st state to allow permitless concealed carry since the mid-1990s. Trevor Burrus, research fellow for the libertarian Cato Institute, said measures in the other states prompted outcry from gun restrictionists, including “a lot of apocalyptic predictions that didn’t come true.”

Burrus said the law could prompt a decline in crime because a criminal could come to find he or she is up against a person who is armed. But others are not convinced.

“As evolving gun laws give more people access to guns more often, we are concerned that we may see more disagreements escalate to shootings and instances of firearm injuries and deaths due to negligent access,” Kim Ogg, district attorney for Harris County, home to Houston and the third most populous county in the United States, said in a statement.

Texas Gun Sense wrote on its website that the law “means that most Texans no longer have to undergo a background check or complete training in order to carry a handgun in public.”

Pawnshops, sporting goods stores, and gun shops require gun buyers to undergo a federal background check. However, because Texas does not require background checks for person-to-

person sales and expositions, gun control activists are concerned that criminals who would not be approved for a gun have one fewer hoop to jump through.

“It’s more guns out and about,” said Switzer. “People even with good intentions, let’s say who don’t store their guns appropriately when they’re out and about or on their person when you’re out, so stolen guns get into the gun flow.”

Amy Swearer, legal fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation think tank in Washington, said the law has been mischaracterized.

“It’s the exact same when it comes to purchasing a firearm in Texas. Nothing has changed,” said Swearer. “It removed the, sort of, time and financial barriers that otherwise existed to being able to conceal carry in public.”

However, Swearer does not expect more people to buy guns.

“Starting with the beginning of the pandemic, you’ve seen a constant, an unprecedented increase in gun sales. We’re still seeing it now sort of on the downside of the pandemic,” Swearer said. “I don’t think [the new law is] necessarily going to affect the number of people who are looking to purchase guns. It just seems to be a different thought process.”

The task at hand for gun experts will be determining what, if any, effect the law has on residents choosing to conceal and carry because it no longer requires a license. Swearer said it is a hard thing to measure, but it makes sense that more people would opt to concealed carry knowing it gives them a leg up if ever in the face of danger.