

Daily Camera (Boulder, Colorado)

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Guns in Colorado

This week's question: This week, the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that the University of Colorado cannot ban concealed-weapon permit holders from bringing guns to campus. Democrats in the state senate rejected a proposal that would extend residential "make my day" laws to businesses. What do you think?

In the interest of full disclosure, my wife and I, with five other people, were held hostage for two very frightening hours in 1981 by a man holding a snub-nosed .38 and wearing a silk stocking over his head. From my perspective at the time, the odds of disarming the guy were not good (about 1/2-inch of the barrel extended beyond the palm of his hand). We made no foolish mistakes and all of us survived unharmed, but I hate guns, particularly handguns.

Concealed weapons are a trap for the unwary and a tragedy waiting to happen. I'm confident the NRA keeps us informed every time a concealed weapon saves a life. Yet I read countless stories of kids shooting their friends while playing with their parent's guns. Being in the same room with someone cleaning their gun also seems to be a very bad idea. Countless studies have shown that guns are far more likely to be used to kill someone the shooter knows (domestic violence, dispute with a friend or roommate, fellow workers, etc.) than to prevent harm.

The Supreme Court can not be blamed for interpreting the statute and concluding the University of Colorado was not empowered by the law to prohibit concealed weapons on campus. The law carved out specific exceptions, but failed to mention CU. My expectation is that the legislature will amend the law to authorize the university (and other educational institutions) to prohibit guns, but not without a fight. Bring

it on.

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Growing up, I "learned" snake and gun hysteria. Now, I try to be more rational with fear. In terms of fear of being murdered on campus, which I call campuscideophobia, concealed carry permits (CCP's) will not increase the murder rate. In fact, they could reduce it. At Virginia Tech, for example, where 32 students were killed, if CCP's had been allowed, a person with a permit could have intervened, reducing the casualty count.

CCP holders are not crazed criminals. Getting a permit costs \$152 for fingerprinting, an FBI background check, and processing. Proof of residency, passage of a difficult training course, and a photo are required. Applicants must be over 21, can never have been convicted of perjury, misdemeanor child abuse, or a felony. They cannot chronically use alcohol, unlawfully abuse controlled substances, have been convicted of third-degree sexual assault, have a mental problem, or be an adjudicated juvenile delinquent. Applicants must know how to safely use a firearm, as well as when they can use it, which is limited to rare situations.

Holders of CCP's are often women. Take the case of Amanda Collins, a University of Nevada student and CCP holder, prevented by law from carrying her gun on campus. Had she been allowed to have hers, she might not have been brutally raped. Despite following all safety procedures, she was left defenseless by university rules. Parents should read Amanda's story. Then, they would realize that students are more at risk from being unable to defend themselves than from legal, CCP holders.

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The Colorado Supreme Court has shown zero common sense on this matter. Allowing college students to pack heat on the Boulder campus is ridiculous. What was this pedantic troop of "robes" thinking in undermining the CU regents' authority? Our elected regents devote considerable time and energy to understanding and meeting the academic needs of students, professors, and staff, and they don't need absurd interference from Ivory Tower magistrates -- as if they knew better.

The first casualty (pray there will be no first casualty) will be blood on the justices' hands, inviting immediate condemnation of their dreadful decision. Just think, our esteemed panel of seven has reaffirmed that it's perfectly legal for those with a concealed carry permit to bear arms in the midst of the inevitable drinking and partying that goes on around campus. Students can now sport them at raucous Folsom football games and the infamous 4/20 Smoke Out on Farrand Field; in dormitories, large lecture halls, and small classrooms; and in the UMC Student Union and Norlin Library. Morning, noon, and night -- guns will be legal anywhere on campus (for "permit holders," that is). What wisdom our top justices of the peace have shown. Even in the Wild West, you had to check your pistol at the saloon door!

Regarding extending the "make my day" law to businesses, the proposed bill was too broad in scope and was rightly rejected by state senators. Giving business owners and their employees the freedom to point a rifle at every petty shoplifter is overkill.

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When common sense is absent what comes to class? Answer: deadly firearms. The arduous debate about

packing heat has both sides using statistics and quotes to back their argument. Lines are drawn in the political sands including politically dominated courts. Doesn't CU have enough distractions without this additional concealed weapons fiasco? We have bloated administrator bonuses, 4/20 waffling, Playboy's top party school award, and now our state Supreme Court gives the green light for students and faculty to bring handguns to CU labs and classrooms, despite the Regents' ban.

Twenty-two states have firearm prohibitions on college campuses. Even Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia in the Heller case that stripped D.C. of its hand gun ban wrote "Nothing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on (the) longstanding prohibition ... forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings." What has happened in Colorado is a political view that interferes with the mores of the university and how it manages its academic mission and civil behavior. An unstable, armed student who just earned an F walks into a faculty office and demands a grade change -- a terrible situation made worse if the instructor is armed.

A weapons escalation among nations is a frightful waste of resources .The addition of weapons on campus flies in the face of a university's purpose and is unlikely to deter an unstable sociopath from fatal intentions. A court has unwisely usurped the legislator's policy. Has fear driven common sense away?

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The "make my day" moniker for House Bill 12-1088 trivializes the traumatic stress of defending one's life. It also reflects baseless prejudice against gun owners. Like the fictional Dirty Harry who popularized "make my day," arguments against self-defense rights fit in Hollywood scripts, but not in reality.

CSU has allowed concealed-carry since 2003, while Colorado community colleges have since 2010. In its

amicus brief for the case, County Sheriffs of Colorado say they "are not aware of any incident since 2003 involving firearms misuse on a Colorado state campus by a person with a licensed carry permit." Or in Utah, which also allows campus conceal-carry. Nor has opposition to campus conceal-carry cited an incident.

Like police officers, civilians carry guns for self-defense against violent criminals, as documented in the **Cato Institute's** "Tough Targets" study and books by Robert A. Waters.

These civilians include heroic life-savers Joel Myrick and Tracey Bridges, who thwarted school shootings after retrieving guns from their vehicles, notes scholar Dave Kopel in "Pretend 'Gun-free' School Zones: A Deadly Legal Fiction," Self-defense is a basic human right. Abridging this right is morally equivalent to disabling seat-belts in someone's car.

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