

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Honorable Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to testify here today. First, let me begin by stating for the record that I fully support SB 176 as written and introduced.

I am an Alaskan, and a UAA student. I grew up with firearms. I am comfortable with firearms because I was taught from the earliest age to respect the gravity of what a person can do with them. I know those consequences first hand. I was an infantry combat Marine from 2002-2007, and served in Operation Iraqi Freedom in Al Anbar province. I also served with Marine Security Company.

The issue of right-to-carry is not new to students at the University of Alaska. At times in the past, law-abiding students have sought to correct the infringement upon their rights by the University. They have appealed to their peers within University community, to the University administration, and to the Board of Regents. I would like to stress that this legislation is necessary only because the Board of Regents has been unwilling to recognize that University policy has unlawfully, and without process or substantive cause, deprived certain members of the student body of their Constitutionally secured rights, willfully and knowingly violating Art. I, Sec. 19. In my estimation, this legislation requires no lengthy debate – it is the correct and justified assertion of protected liberties.

I recognize that many people are afraid of firearms, and this fear has pervaded our national culture because of acts of heinous, cruel, violence at other schools, universities, and public places. Because of these past tragedies, many will argue that the risk of these tragedies striking our own University makes this legislation unwise at best. I understand, and respect that fear – but I also understand without facing dangers, nothing will change. Whatever fears or

reservations people may have, this legislation represents a reasoned, rational, step toward protecting the rights of students that the University has willfully abridged.

It should be recognized that, disregarding the legal issue, this legislation is no more a danger to the safety of University campuses than the current policy. From the standpoint of a professional trained in site and personnel security, I understand the concerns that some have raised with respect to the implications that this legislation would have for ensuring the safety of University campuses. However, in my professional experience as a combat veteran, there is very little that will stop someone who is motivated and committed to engaging in an act of violence. A small vinyl sign on a door to University premises that forbids the possession of weapons or explosives will have no deterrent effect on someone entering those buildings intent on doing harm. The problem with policies and laws enacted to protect people from violence is that those who would ignore it are already intent on breaking the law by committing acts of violence. For the people intent on doing so, the commission of one more offense will be of negligible consequence when held in contrast to their intended act. At best, the consequences of current policy are buildings of innocent victims without means of defense. Current policy has penned and hobbled the sheep, while warning the wolves not to come in.

In conclusion, I would like to add that it has become all too common in our society to bend to the fear of risks that are inherent to a life of free peoples; as a society we all too often meekly step aside when the protection of individual liberties are weighed against a legislated *perception* of safety. As a nation and a state governed by laws, anything less than requiring the University to follow the letter and spirit of the law would fail the principles of liberty that founded this nation. Therefore, I urge you to support this legislation, recalling the words of Benjamin Franklin in his 1755 reply from the Pennsylvania Assembly to Deputy Governor

Robert Hunter Morris, “Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.”