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Sent: Saturday, March 08, 2014 1:03 PM

To: Sen. John Coghill; Sen. Lesil McGuire; Sen. Fred Dyson; Sen. Donny Olson; Sen. Bill Wielechowski

Subject: HB 176 --- Books, not Guns on Campus

Dear Senators,

As a life-long gun owner, hunter, and father to a son I hope to raise as a responsible firearm user, I appreciate your efforts to protect those liberties; however, as an Associate Professor at UAA, I cannot support HB 176 in any form. The last thing we need on campus are guns, loaded or unloaded.

If you want to talk about what guns at a school can do, you are free to speak to my father. A retired Alaska law enforcement officer who responded armed to the school shooting in Bethel. If you want to talk about traumatized students and teachers after a school shooting, I am happy to speak at length about the suffering of individuals that to this day is endured by those who were there in Bethel in 1997. It is unlikely an armed teacher might have stopped Evan Ramsey after he killed my friend Josh, or before he killed the man who would have been the principal when I began teaching there the next year. The terror and trauma would have been no different.

As a gun enthusiast, I cannot fathom a reason why I would want to take a gun on campus, or why anyone should think they have a constitutional right to take a firearm to a place of education. College is a time for so many young people that is emotional, difficult, and at times a place where mental illness first rears its awful head. These are the ingredients for trouble. Adding a loaded firearm to the equation does will not bode well.

As a writer and teacher at a school where we had a shooting, I can tell you I have studied the topic extensively. Anyone who has been properly trained in the handling and use of firearms knows that to draw your weapon means you have to be ready to kill. Keeping that in mind, this bill is enabling people to carry weapons onto campus, and should someone threaten another with a gun, a law abiding citizen who also is carrying a weapon is ultimately put into a precarious Catch .22 (pun not intended). Say for example, an active shooter was on campus, and I'm carrying one of my pistols (perhaps while in my office or teaching) and I respond with my own weapons, how are the police to know who the active shooter is? How are other armed citizens going to know who the bad guy is?

Who other than the police have the skills or the training to deal with a situation such as an active shooter on the campus? Imagine, if you will, the scenario of ONE student who decides to reveal he has a gun, perhaps shots are fired, and half a dozen students, faculty, and staff are all suddenly revealing their own weapons. What sort of tactical response will the campus police, Troopers, or city police, be able to muster in such a situation?

These are simple questions with complex answers. The reality is that we don't need this fight for our gun rights. No one is clamoring to bring their guns on campus. No one is actually offended or feels their constitutional rights are being infringed upon when they step foot there. Anyone with any sort of gun sense and an understanding of the new reality of dangerous campus shooters, should also know that an armed contingent of students, faculty, and staff isn't going to save lives. We need to think about the rights of those whose lives will be lost, and we need to think about the rights of those of us who work in the hallowed halls of academia, and the right not to be scared every day we arrive to work for fear a stressed student might snap and a dozen untrained others respond with their own guns. We have a right to not worry about which amongst us who are armed bear ill will or are just protecting their rights.

Our job on campus is to teach and inspire our future leaders and citizens to learn how to protect their rights through their voices and their minds, not by bearing their arms to make statements. Liberty is not at stake on college campuses in Alaska. Not yet anyway. Please help us keep it that way.

Thank you for your time,

Don Rearden

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