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Concealed Carry on Campus

Good morning, committee members, representatives of your respective districts, and statesmen. My name is Elijah Roden, and I am student at the University of Texas, double majoring in Government and Rhetoric and Writing with a certificate in Social Justice, Politics, and Law. I am here to speak with you about the legalization of concealed carry on campus, to dispel many of the arguments against it, to explain why many students want this bill to be passed.

As I'm sure that you're aware, the current statutes regarding concealed carry prevents citizens who lawfully obtained their concealed carry licenses, went through the extensive background checks, and passed the mandated marksman class from carrying their firearm on college campuses in an effort to monopolize the use of force on college campuses. The shootings at Virginia Tech, at the UT library, and, more recently, at Sandy Hook elementary have prompted the entire nation to step back and evaluate how its policies function, and a myriad of arguments are put forth in order to convince you that allowing law-abiding gun owners to carry their firearms on campus would be a bad idea. They articulate a perfectly reasonable hesitation about guns, for it is entirely justifiable to desire to evaluate this prospect before it is enacted. Many opponents to the idea debate this premise with arguments based solely in emotional appeals, in impassioned assertions, in feelings; many wish to tell you that fire arms on campus lead to a greater number of shootings, that they lead to a larger number of casualties, that they make students... feel uncomfortable. These arguments are those that I will evaluate today.

First, let's look at the argument claiming: "Guns on campus would increase violence."

Since the fall of 2006, Utah has allowed those with a license to carry on 9 public colleges and 1 technical school, thirty schools statewide. Colorado State University and Blue Ridge Community College has allowed concealed carry since 2003 and 1995 (Common Arguments). If the argument is true, it would follow that these schools have seen spikes in gun violence rates, including threats and suicide, yet after *100* combined semesters, none of these 12 schools have seen a *single* incident, accident, or gun theft. Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that owners of concealed carry licenses are 5 times *less* likely to commit violent crimes (Sturdevant). For gun violence to increase as a direct result of the amount of legal guns on campus, wouldn't those using them have to be more inclined to violence?

Next, we often encounter the twin arguments about the lives of students in college. The first being that the lives of students while in college are characterized by drugs and alcohol; the second stems from emotional volatility in that allowing guns on campus would harm classroom discussions or students could "snap" from pressures. I would like to emphasize that this isn't a debate about whether or not college students *ought* to have firearms, but whether or not *lawful* concealed carry owners can be allowed to utilize the permit. Passing this bill would not increase the accessibility of firearms to students under age. Passing this bill would not change the existing penalties for carrying while under the influence. Passing this bill would not change the law-abiding nature of those who undertake the burden of carrying a concealed weapon. The people who would be allowed to carry are those same adults, 21 and above, that possess the ability to carry a firearm almost anywhere else. Do we see these responsible individuals losing control elsewhere, over parking tickets, over being fired from a job? No less would be required of them at a college campus. Additionally, the U.S. Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center

and U.S. Department of Education released a study exploring the “snap” theory. Their results indicated that, contrary to popular belief, school shooters have a downward spiral accompanied by warning signs. Was the attack at Virginia Tech, at Sandy Hook, an assailant who snapped? None of these were such a case. The types of individuals who seek a concealed carry license are not those who are, by nature, irresponsible or lacking in self-control. The reason I intertwined these arguments lies in responsibility, and the individuals who seek the approval of law, who abide by law, and, when the law contradicts their desires, remain truthful to the rule of law are the very definition of responsibility.

Some have claimed that, the presence of concealed carry would make the job more difficult for the responders and worse for the students. Others, who support the idea, take the stance that it will reduce the casualties by enabling the students to fight back. The first claims CHL holders would become vigilantes, going out of their way to find the shooter. The second group asserts that the students will be able to fight back, and that the students will not be forced to suffer the same type of drawn out scenario that happened at Virginia. To each of these, I must respond that they miss the point. Stopping school shootings are not the purpose of concealed carry. Realistically, the number of CHL licensees on campus will be minuscule. The number of students above the age of 21, who possess a permit and frequent campus, is small indeed, and campus shootings are rare. Many students wish to be allowed to carry concealed fire arms on campus, not because it would stop school shootings, but because of the commute. The ultimate aim of allowing a person to have a concealed weapon in the first place is self-preservation, to protect what you are and what you own. Much of the disconnect arises when law makers consider that most students feel safe on campus. I won’t stand here and lie to you, claiming that I feel insecure while walking around at UT. But what about when students leave the university,

biking, or walking to their apartments? While crime rates are lower at schools, those occurring off campus, even just a few feet away from the campus line, are not included in the reports.

When a young woman, heading home after a long day studying, encounters a rapist on the way to her car, we must wonder: does it protect those who leave university property to get home? When a woman walking from a late lab to her apartment encounters a mugger, we must ask: do the current statutes truly protect the students who attend this university?

Lastly, many institutions argue that students would feel uncomfortable attending class if they knew that other students could be carrying a weapon. While I have the utmost respect for the comfort zones of students, I increasingly find it hard to consider this argument. In the United States, 1 percent of the population is licensed to carry concealed firearms, and these students visit theaters with over 100 people (Common Arguments). These students attend public places all the time in which law abiding citizens are allowed to carry weapons. Why are college campuses sacred ground in which legal guns cannot be allowed? There is no fundamental difference between the University of Texas and the restaurants on Guadalupe. The same students visit both; the same students are comfortable in both.

Thus, I urge you today to consider what I have said. You are statesmen, tasked with passing laws for the wellbeing of society, for protecting individual liberties, and enacting legislation to better guard the citizens of this great state. I reject the idea that my rights end at another's comfort zone. Adopting this type of philosophy essentially claims asserts the premise that the rights of an individual end at another's comfort zone, and not that your rights end where mine begin. It is a dangerous precedent to set. A free society does not deny its citizens a right unless there is empirical evidence proving that enabling a right will pose a threat to society at large. Legalizing concealed carry on campus will do no such thing. Thank you for your time.

Works Cited:

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Self-Analysis

The primary claim in this article is that individuals with concealed carry permits ought to be allowed to carry their weapons on campus. There is little factual evidence against it, and most the arguments are based in emotional appeals. The situation arises from the renewed discussion inspired by the Sandy Hook shooting, the Virginia Tech shooting, and other mass shootings which have put the notion of gun control and concealed carry in the national spotlight. The primary audience would be those members of the House committee voting to allow the concealed carry bill to the floor for a vote, and the purpose of this speech is to persuade the House members to 1) allow the bill the floor and 2) vote on for the bill when it gets to the floor. The exigency would arise when the opportunity, the House committee hearing, and the situation, the ongoing discussion, overlap, which would be now or at the next House hearing in a week.

The most significant appeals were those appeals to logic. There were various inartistic proofs like the statistics from Sturdevant and the studies done by the Department of Education. In conjunction with this, there were a couple other artistic proofs which didn't require support from statistics. The argument about personal responsibility and abiding by the law would be one.

Major Premise: Abiding by the law is responsible.

Minor Premise: Statistics show that CHL owners abide by the law

Conclusion: Therefore, CHL owners are responsible.

I think it is important to reference how these logical appeals play into the argument in general. Usually, arguments for or against CHL's on campus are impassioned. They are full of emotion

and pathetic appeals, and while there is nothing wrong with that in moderation, it is important to have a balanced debate. The insertion of a variety of logical argumentation sheds light on the fact that not all of the emotional arguments really have grounds to make the claims that they do, so the effect they have on the audience may be more persuasive, given the respectable nature of some of the cited sources. It is also important to understand that this is a speech, and the embodied gestures of a speaker cannot really be seen through what has been typed up. Italics attempt to display where emphasis would be placed by the speaker, and in those instances, it was on situations in which the results didn't match up with public opinion. Towards the end of this speech, more embedded ideographs came into play, attempting to invoke a sense of pride and responsibility within the representatives, for they are statesmen. Their role is to protect freedom and liberty, or at least that's how the author attempted to frame and emphasize their role. Furthermore, the ideological arguments attempted to play on the ideals Americans possess as far as individuality, freedom, liberty, and security are concerned through the use of said words.

Two rhetorical figures mentioned in this piece were anaphora, enumeration, and climax. Anaphora comes in to play in several parts of the piece. One notable instance is "Passing this bill... passing this bill... passing this bill." In that instance, it reiterates and emphasizes the effects that passing the bill will not have. It works based off of previously mentioned points, and builds up to a point that it will not change the character of the individuals. In the minds of the reader, its intent was to emphasize how these consequences will not come into being if the bill is signed into law. The enumeration comes into play at the beginning, when the author first outlines the requirements for gaining a concealed carry: "lawfully obtained..." The point for this, like all enumerations generally do, is to place emphasis on the subject matter. It focuses in on the fact that these individuals didn't just apply and receive a license. They had to go through a long,

drawn out process requiring dedication. The climax is an odd form in that most climaxes build to the final, most important point. This crescendo leads to one that ought to be the least important, but still remains the most heard: “lead to a greater number of shootings, that they lead to a larger number of casualties, that they make students... feel uncomfortable.”

The stasis of this argument could be read as either one of two. Someone could make the argument that it is a quality stasis, trying to convince the reader that concealed carry on campus is good. A different approach could also be taken in that we all agree crime is bad and safety is good, but how best to go about that? What policy ought to be enacted to make sure individual safety is upheld. Each of these have merit, but I suppose the main intent of the author was that of quality, convincing the legislators that concealed carry on campus is good. Admittedly, the lines are blurred given the policy oriented nature of the forum.