



NEW LAW ALLOWS OPEN CARRY IN TEXAS

With the introduction of the new open-carry law, questions have been raised about the legality of open-carrying guns around schools.

BY EMILY HUMBLE
STAFF REPORTER

A new statewide open-carry law went into effect on Jan. 1, allowing licensed gun owners to carry their unconcealed guns in public. As gun owners now are free to walk in most public areas with their guns openly displayed, some concerns have been raised about whether the open-carry law leads to higher danger of gun violence against schools.

However, at KPARK and all other Humble ISD schools, “guns remain completely prohibited in our schools and any/all school sponsored events/activities,” Dr. Guy Sconzo, superintendent of Humble ISD, said.

Just as before the law passed, the only people legally allowed to carry guns inside schools are peace officers. Teachers, parents, and students remain prohibited from having guns inside Humble ISD schools.

The current rights of gun owners

in Texas are nearly the same as they were before the passing of the new open-carry law. Before the open-carry law, guns could be carried in the same areas as now, but they had to be hidden. The only change is that guns may now be visible. The areas where guns are banned has not changed. Businesses still have the right to ban guns, concealed or openly carried, on their property.

Though it is legal for someone to open-carry a gun near school property, but not on it, the school will still be put on alert in such an event.

“While someone may be legally carrying a firearm on a street or greenbelt close to KPARK, school officials will notify the authorities and will follow emergency procedures until such time as the police can investigate,” assistant principal Brian Johnson said. “How we deal with guns has not changed much.”

Humble ISD does not have a singular policy that deals with guns, ac-

cording to Sconzo.

“That is embedded in various policies having to do with security, emergency management, visitors, and student code of conduct,” he said.

While the details of Humble ISD’s treatment of guns are woven in through the general rules of the district, Houston ISD recently posted an official blog post detailing how they deal with guns in light of the new law.

Johnson is not concerned that Humble ISD’s rules have not been as publicized and doesn’t think that will cause confusion.

“Houston ISD’s website is simply a restatement of what is legal and what is allowed by law in terms of an individual’s right to carry a firearm,” said Johnson. “I mean, it’s against the law to have a gun on public school property. It’s not very confusing to me, I don’t know why someone would be confused.”

While guns are still not allowed at

school, the open-carry law means more KPARK students are seeing guns in day-to-day life.

“I went to Chelsea’s,” senior Claire Tolbert said, “and this guy was sitting over there with a gun strapped to his waist, and I didn’t know [the law] passed so I was really confused!”

Tolbert has mixed feelings about the law.

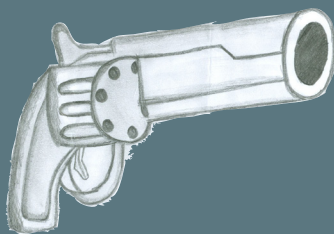
“I feel like it’s kind of hurting the people who don’t like guns,” Tolbert said. “Some people, they’re just opposed to guns, so they don’t want to see them being carried around in public. And I feel like they have that right to not see them. But then I feel that the other people who like guns have the right to carry them. So the [concealed-carry law], I thought, helped both sides, and now the open-carry one – I don’t find it very good.”

The question of whether the new law will lead to higher gun violence in Texas is unanswered as of yet. Researchers at Stanford found that right-to-carry laws are linked to an increase in gun violence, while journalists at Politifact.com turned up inconclusive answers to whether open-carry laws specifically increase or decrease crime.

“Unfortunately, the lesson repeatedly experienced and learned nationally is that protection from gun violence is just not foolproof,” Sconzo said. “The open-carry law does not change that reality, in my opinion, and we just stay focused on updating and upgrading facilities and procedures.”

OPEN CARRY QUIZ

Quiz by Emily Humble.
Artwork on page by Aryana White.



1. Is it legal to open-carry a gun on school property?

- A) Yes
- B) No

2. Do you need a special license to open carry?

- A) Yes
- B) No

3. Can my teachers open-carry in the classroom?

- A) Yes
- B) No

4. What do I do if I see a gun on school campus?

- A) Scream and run away.
- B) Tell a teacher, school admin, or peace officer.
- C) Ignore it.
- D) Snapchat it to my friends.

5. Despite the new law, open-carry is still banned in many areas. Which of the following is a place where someone CAN open-carry in Texas?

- A) Airports
- B) Starbucks
- C) Deerbrook Mall
- D) Walmart

6. While guns are illegal on public school campuses, what about on public college campuses in Texas?

- A) They are illegal.
- B) Gun owners can open-carry there after Aug. 1.
- C) Gun owners can concealed-carry there after Aug. 1.
- D) Only professors can have guns.



ANSWERS
1.B 2.A 3.B 4.B 5.C 6.A