

Hobart, Jamie

From: thomas Madden <thomas.madden@snet.net>
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To: pstestimony
Subject: S.B. No 20 comments.

29 February 2016

Public Safety and Security Committee

S.B. No 20
Firearm while intoxicated

I am writing you to complain about the lax handgun laws in Connecticut.

I occasionally visit a popular sports themed restaurant in Cromwell, where I enjoy the food and watch sports. Being a sociable guy, I often start conversations with people seated near me. One of the times, I spoke with the guys next to me who were pretty buzzed. In this particular case, the guy next to me eventually slurred, "Hey, if there is any trouble here I got protection" and he partially pulled a 38 caliber pistol out of his pocket. Externally I shrugged it off but ice went through my veins at the thought of an inebriated guy with a loaded handgun standing right next to me. I decided to speed up drinking my beer. Before I could finish the beer, he completely pulled out the pistol into plain sight. I calmly advised him to put it back into his pocket and then I left the bar.

Another time, at the same location, an acquaintance of mine sitting next to me brought up the discussion of gun control. To make a long discussion short, after I stated my belief that handguns should be severely restricted he got angry and started calling me names. I can easily take care of myself but he told me he always carried a handgun and he had one on him. He had been drinking so I did not confront him but asked him to leave my company.

My third experience of an inebriated gun carrier at this same location was not a discussion with me but with the guy next to me. He was talking with a guy who bragged he had a handgun in his pocket. When the gun carrier eventually left, we all sighed in relief.

All three events are real, and happened within the last three years. I did not fabricate anything.

After this last occurrence, I went home and read up on the gun laws in Connecticut. I was SHOCKED to see that there are no restrictions on carrying a handgun and drinking alcohol. The only connection between alcohol consumption and handguns is that a gun permit can be denied or removed from "alcohol-dependent" people. That is it. [General CT Statutes Chapter 529, Sec 29-28]

Does this make sense to you? Does allowing handguns in bars where people are drinking make any kind of sense to anyone? Very often drunk people behave erratically and aggressively. Does allowing handguns under these conditions strike you as proper?

I spoke both with the state police and the Cromwell police and they both thought that there was a limit of one beer allowed for people carrying handguns. I didn't correct them.

I did find an official CT state document of a summarization of state gun laws. OLR research report dated May 21, 2007. I cut their words verbatim into this letter.

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2007/rpt/2007-r-0369.htm>

In it states:

The permit to carry handguns allows people to carry them openly or concealed, but mature judgment, says the Board of Firearm Permit Examiners, dictates that (1) "every effort should be made to ensure that no gun is exposed to view or carried in any manner that would tend to alarm people who see it. . . [and] (2) no handgun should be carried unless carrying the gun at the time and place involved is prudent and proper in the circumstances. "

For example, according to the board, handguns should not be carried:

- 1. into a bar or other place where alcohol is being consumed;*
- 2. in any situation involving stress such as an argument;*
- 3. after consuming alcohol or any drugs other than those legally prescribed; or*
- 4. in any building, residential or commercial, whose owner prohibits handguns (<http://www.ct.gov/bfpe/cwp/view.asp?a=1252&q=254186>).*

I called the Board of Firearm Permit Examiners (860-256-2947) and asked them about it. That document is NOT stating the law but their beliefs about the law.

Why aren't the above statements included directly into the statutes? {Why is locating the gun laws, which are incredibly weak, so difficult to locate in the statutes? Why is there a major heading about elevators under public safety in the statutes but not one about GUNS?? }

Why not make it a straight-out LAW to penalize anyone that drinks alcohol while handling guns? You aren't allowed to drink and drive; why are we allowed to drink and be armed?

Why not change the laws so carrying guns is not allowed any location that serves alcohol, with the obvious exception of law enforcement officials? This relieves bar owners from having to alienate their gun-carrying-clients and lose business. Bar owners do not want to lose any customers so they will not post signs about disallowing guns on their premises. If the state law is made, the bar owners can blame the state and get relief of a potential hazard. I bet their insurance rates would drop.

Also the law states that the proper way to transport handguns is the weapon must be unloaded and in a locked containment. If there is not a locked containment, the weapon must be stored outside the passenger compartment.

[Sec 29-35]

"transporting a pistol or revolver" means transporting a pistol or revolver that is unloaded and, if such pistol or revolver is being transported in a motor vehicle, is not readily accessible or directly accessible from the passenger compartment of the vehicle or, if such pistol or revolver is being transported in a motor vehicle that

does not have a compartment separate from the passenger compartment, such pistol or revolver shall be contained in a locked container other than the glove compartment or console.

My point on this is this - why is this section of the law not strictly enforced and promoted as a public safety issue? I know the three gun owners I mentioned just keep their weapons in their pocket. These idiots think they are cowboys or something and it is just a toy to them. Why aren't the existing laws more stringently enforced? If the gun owners are required to lock their gun during transportation perhaps they won't carry the weapon so haphazardly and casually like they do.

I'd like to see laws to protect the public from gun owners that think it is quite alright to drink and carry a loaded gun around with them. I'd like to see the laws changed to restrict people from drinking ANY alcohol and carrying handguns. I'd like to see laws that forbid handguns on any premise that is selling alcohol for consumption.

I'd also like to see stricter enforcement of the existing laws about the transportation of handguns. I think there should be a media campaign to inform the public that guns are required to be locked whenever they are being transported. If more people knew this, there would be fewer idiots carrying loaded handguns around.

I appreciate the service you do for the state. I hope you see some value in my points and you are able to consider to make the changes that I deem necessary to improve public safety.

It is only a matter of time that a drunk in a bar harms or kills another person, again.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Madden

19 Wynwood Drive
Cromwell CT 06416
(860) 729-0607
Thomas.madden@snet.net