

The Community Endangerment Bill AB 763

The Community Endangerment Bill or Concealed Carry Bill threatens the public health and endangers patients and health care facilities. The so-called "Personal Protection Act," which was recently introduced by Rep. Gunderson and Sen. Zien, allows almost anyone to carry deadly, hidden weapons into most public places, including clinics, hospitals and other health care facilities.

Wisconsin Residents, Don't Want to Legalize Concealed Weapons, Especially Around Health Care Facilities

The 2003 Badger poll found that approximately 60% of men and 80% of women in Wisconsin oppose allowing ordinary citizens to carry a concealed weapon. And polling completed during the 2003-04 session found that 78% of Wisconsin voters would be less likely to support a candidate who supported allowing hidden, deadly weapons in health care facilities.

The Community Endangerment Bill Will Compromise Patient & Staff Safety

Since this legislation does not include an exemption for health care facilities, the safety and well-being of reproductive health clinic patients and staff are at risk. Because women's health care centers play a unique role in health care communities as a provider dedicated solely to reproductive health care, there is great concern over the dangerous ramifications this legislation creates for patients and staff of these centers. Reproductive health centers around the country have been targeted for harassment, vandalism and violence over the past 25 years. At the end of 2000, the tally of escalating violence against women's health facilities included:

- 836 vandalisms
- 365 invasions
- 57 burglaries
- 77 attempted bombings or arsons
- 40 bombings
- 406 stalkings
- 322 death threats
- 112 assault and batteries
- 3 kidnappings
- 16 attempted murders
- 1 maiming
- 8 murders

(Figures from 2000)

This misguided animosity is further exacerbated if an extremist has a license to carry hidden, lethal weapons. Under the Community Endangerment Act, it will become increasingly more difficult and expensive to monitor individuals approaching or entering health care facilities. Security staff will be unaware who is and who is not in possession of a deadly weapon. This greatly compromises clinic security systems and our ability to keep patients and staff safe.

The Community Endangerment Bill Allows Potentially Dangerous Individuals to Carry Hidden Deadly Weapons Into and Around Health Care Facilities

As mentioned, reproductive health care providers are often the target of dangerous extremist behavior. In the last five years, one in five health centers providing abortions reported incidents of severe violence, including gunfire. Across the country reproductive health care providers have been murdered and health centers destroyed by individuals who would qualify for a license to carry a hidden, deadly weapon under the Community Endangerment Act:

Fact Sheet

- Mike Bray—convicted of the bombing and arson of a Maryland Health Center;
- Michael Griffith—convicted of murdering a physician in Florida;
- Paul Hill—convicted of murdering a physician and his security guard in Florida;
- Shelly Shannon—convicted of the arson of a health center and the attempted murder of a physician in Kansas;
- James Kopp—convicted of murdering a New York physician;
- John Salvi—convicted of murdering two nurses after he entered a Massachusetts health center and fired his gun.

In fact, a 2000 study by the Violence Policy Center in the state of Texas found that the arrest rate for weapon related offenses among those with permits to carry hidden weapons was 66% higher than the arrest rates among the general adult population! Security as a result of this actual and potential violence depletes the limited resources available to provide reproductive health care for Wisconsin's most underserved patients.

The Community Endangerment Bill Poses a Threat to Public Health & Safety

Compared to most states, Wisconsin is a very safe place to live and raise a family. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, violent crime including homicides, armed robberies and forcible rapes has dramatically decreased in the past ten years. Allowing ordinary citizens to carry concealed deadly weapons is a sure fire way to change that statistic. There is no legitimate justification for a bill that so greatly jeopardizes public safety as a whole.

The Community Endangerment Bill Will Further Burden Wisconsin Taxpayers During a Time When the State Already Faces a Fiscal Crisis

Estimates from last session are just as applicable to AB 763, which is nearly an identical bill. The costs of implementing a hidden weapons law was estimated to be close to \$4 million. Regardless of whether local sheriff departments or the Department of Justice issues and enforces the permits, the costs of this bill will surely be passed on to Wisconsin taxpayers. Thus, supporters of this bill demonstrate that not only do they wish to make Wisconsin a more dangerous place to raise a family—but they want Wisconsin's families to pay it!

Additional Facts on Gun Violence

- 2002 statistics show that the half dozen states with permissive concealed carry laws have four to five times higher rates of firearm deaths than the half dozen states that do not allow carrying a concealed firearm. Wisconsin ranks near the bottom at #37.
- Homes with firearms in them are four times more likely to have an unintended gun death than those without.
- When a firearm is present, death by suicide is eleven times more likely to occur.
- Pressure to pass this legislation comes from the gun industry. Manufacturers saw their profits plummet in the late 80's before coming up with the idea to create new markets. Gun industry stocks are rising from 25 - 50 % in 2005.
- The presence of guns in the home escalates the risk of homicide to women by more than three times.

This information was share with you by the Wisconsin Alliance for Women's Health.

*For more information about legislation related to reproductive health or to support women's health contact WAWH at
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