

Wellness is Now in Session



timelyMD

Virtual Health and Well-Being
for Students

Request a Quote

Lawmakers push to allow guns on US university campuses

Faculty and presidents fight back as conservative lawmakers argue – without evidence – that weapons increase safety

February 1, 2023

[Paul Basken \(/author/paul-basken\)](#)

Twitter: [@pbasken \(https://twitter.com/pbasken\)](https://twitter.com/pbasken)

1

US public universities are fighting new attempts to allow guns on campuses, with conservative state lawmakers undeterred by limited research data and clear opposition from institutional leaders.

The most recent instance involves West Virginia, where the state senate voted 29-4 in favour of legislation to let people bring firearms on to college and university campuses, despite pleas from state university leaders. The bill heads next to the state legislature's other chamber, the House of Delegates, which is also overwhelmingly dominated by Republicans.

The US already has about a dozen states that permit guns on college campuses, with lawmakers in several others already trying or expected to pursue the idea this year, according to the activist group Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus.

"The gun lobby is trying to find as many places as possible where people can carry," said the organisation's executive director, Andy Pelosi.

In West Virginia, the presidents of the state's two largest higher education institutions, West Virginia University (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/west-virginia-university>) and Marshall University (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/marshall-university>), wrote to the lawmakers urging them



Source: iStock

By using the THE website you agree to our use of cookies as described in our cookie policy ([/cookie-policy](#)).

not to pass (<https://presidentgee.wvu.edu/files/d/a1543596-ece5-4108-8bf7-28714bda996b/letter-from-gee-and-smith-on-sb10.pdf>) the bill.

Governing boards “are best suited to decide whether guns should be permitted on campus”, Gordon Gee and Brad Smith told senators.



West Virginia University (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/west-virginia-university>)’s faculty senate also approved a resolution opposing the bill.

States that already allow guns on the campuses of their public colleges and universities include Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Montana, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah and Wisconsin.

New York lawmakers are being asked to join them, despite the state’s Democratic majority, while more plausible campaigns appear possible this year in several other states, including Iowa, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Carolina and South Dakota. Idaho lawmakers are considering legislation that would stop colleges putting limits on where guns can be carried.

The fatal shootings last May of 19 students and two teachers at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, seems to have sparked an increase in political interest in allowing guns in educational settings, said Cheryl Jonson, associate professor of criminal justice at Ohio’s Xavier University (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/xavier-university>).

Last year, gun control campaigners in Arizona managed a narrow victory against a bill to permit weapons on campuses, and the state’s change this year to a Democratic governor solidifies that win, Mr Pelosi said.

While the university presidents in West Virginia have fought back, their colleagues in other states are sometimes more reluctant, Mr Pelosi said, given their fear of antagonising politicians responsible for controlling their budgets and policies.

Another challenge, Mr Pelosi acknowledged, was the relative lack of research data specific to the cases of college campuses. There is plentiful research evidence (<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/fact-sheet-weakening-requirements-to-carry-a-concealed-firearm-increases-violent-crime/>) showing that more guns in society (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/democrats-press-opportunity-revive-us-gun-research>) lead to more violence and death (<https://www.rand.org/research/gun-policy/analysis/concealed-carry/violent-crime.html>), and some studies that link guns to increased crime on campuses, he said. But findings specific to college settings are limited by the fact that most states that allow guns on campuses do not track how many people actually carry them, he said.

But overall, Mr Pelosi’s group and others point out that in a nation with more than 40,000 gun deaths per year, university campuses are already among the safest places to be. And there’s no clear evidence of a cookie policy (/cookie-policy) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/doi/10.1089/vio.2021.0046>) – despite West Virginia lawmakers pushing their “Campus Self-

Defense Act (http://www.wvlegislature.gov/Bill_Status/bills_history.cfm?INPUT=10&year=2023&sessiontype=RS)” on the grounds that it will help women deter sexual violence – that guns make a college campus safer, Mr Pelosi said. Women’s advocacy groups instead are among numerous campus constituencies especially opposed to such laws, he said, fearing that gun permissiveness will help arm their potential attackers (<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/idaho-murders-put-spotlight-criminology-students>).



paul.basken@timeshighereducation.com (<mailto:paul.basken@timeshighereducation.com>)

Read more about: [Politics \(/policy/politics\)](/policy/politics)

RELATED ARTICLES



Democrats press opportunity to revive US gun research

[\(/news/democrats-press-opportunity-revive-us-gun-research\)](/news/democrats-press-opportunity-revive-us-gun-research)

By Paul Basken (</author/paul-basken>) 22 January



Judge dismisses lawsuit against Texas campus carry law

[\(/news/judge-dismisses-lawsuit-against-texas-campus-carry-law\)](/news/judge-dismisses-lawsuit-against-texas-campus-carry-law)

By Ellie Bothwell (</content/ellie-bothwell>) 12 July



Office hours in bars dodge campus carry laws

[\(/news/pints-not-pistols-office-hours-in-bars-dodge-campus-carry-laws\)](/news/pints-not-pistols-office-hours-in-bars-dodge-campus-carry-laws)

By Jon Marcus (</content/jon-marcus>) 19 March



US universities 'obliged' to speak out against gun laws

[\(/news/us-universities-obliged-to-speak-out-against-gun-laws\)](/news/us-universities-obliged-to-speak-out-against-gun-laws)

By Ellie Bothwell (</content/ellie-bothwell>) 16 June

By using the THE website you agree to our use of cookies as described in our [cookie policy](/cookie-policy) (</cookie-policy>).

RELATED UNIVERSITIES



(/world-university-rankings/west-virginia-university)



(/world-university-rankings/west-virginia-university)

West Virginia University (/world-university-rankings/west-virginia-university)

Explore (/world-university-rankings/west-virginia-university)

Enquire
(https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/register-interest/shorelight?
utm_medium=thewebsite&utm_campaign=cta-link&utm_source=profile-driver&iid=i-78874701)

Marshall University (/world-university-rankings/marshall-university)

Explore (/world-university-rankings/marshall-university)

Enquire
(https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/university-partnerships?
utm_medium=thewebsite&utm_campaign=cta-link&utm_source=profile-driver&iid=i-75700901)

Xavier University (/world-university-rankings/xavier-university)

Explore (/world-university-rankings/xavier-university)

Enquire
(https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/interest/shorelight?
utm_medium=thewebsite&utm_campaign=cta-link&utm_source=profile-driver&iid=i-4055)

READER'S COMMENTS (1)

#1 Submitted by m.robertson8_291084 on February 1, 2023 - 1:06pm

Surely it should be up to an institution to decide what is and is not acceptable on its premises - unless there is a blanket prohibition on a certain item.

Even if a law was passed saying that it was acceptable to carry firearms in public and in places accessible to the public, any given establishment should be able to say "Not here" if they felt it more appropriate.

How far would a properly-licenced gun owner get taking their prized firearm into a state senate building, I wonder?

reply (/comment/reply/725265/67402)

HAVE YOUR SAY

Comment *

By using the THE website you agree to our use of cookies as described in our cookie policy (/cookie-policy).

Please make sure that your comment does not contravene our terms and conditions (/terms-and-conditions/). Update your username to use in public-facing parts of the site, such as commenting on articles here (/user).

Submit comment

YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE



State support to US higher education up 27 per cent in five years

(/news/state-support-us-higher-education-27-cent-five-years)

By Paul Basken (/author/paul-basken) 2 February



Students on placements need welfare funding, say universities

(/news/students-placements-need-welfare-funding-say-universities)

By John Ross (/author/john-ross) 2 February



Relationships with policymakers are vital for impact, and they are possible

(/opinion/relationships-policymakers-are-vital-impact-and-they-are-possible)

By Matthew Flinders (/author/matthew-flinders) 2 February



Informing national policy is not easy but it is a must for scholars

(/opinion/informing-national-policy-not-easy-it-must-scholars)

By Natascha Engel (/author/natascha-engel) 2 February

SPONSORED

(/hub/p/using-technology-enhance-learning-experience)

(/hub/hong-kong-baptist-university/p/hkbu-university-asia-world)

(/hub/United-Arab-Emirates-university/p/creating-artificial-lakes-water-crossed-countries)

By using the THE website you agree to our use of cookies as described in our cookie policy.

Using technology to enhance the learning experience (/hub/p/using-technology-enhance-learning-experience)

Find out more about moving learning online and D2L

Promoted by D2L APAC
SPONSORED

HKBU – A University in Asia for the World (/hub/hong-kong-baptist-university/p/hkbu-university-asia-world)

HKBU Vision: To be a leading liberal arts university in Asia for the world delivering academic excellence in a caring, creative and global culture

Promoted by Hong Kong Baptist University
SPONSORED

Creating artificial lakes in water-stressed countries (/hub/ united-arab-emirates-university/p/creating-artificial-lakes-water-stressed-countries)

Researchers at UAEU are collaborating with Abu Dhabi Municipality to develop sustainable solutions for rising groundwater

Promoted by United Arab Emirates University
SPONSORED

FEATURED JOBS

Associate Professor, Department of Penal Law, Criminal Litigation and Forensic Science (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/listing/326783/associate-professor-department-of-penal-law-criminal-litigation-and-forensic-science/?trackid=10&utm_source=the-jobs-service)

RUDN UNIVERSITY



Microbiologist Position (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/listing/326767/microbiologist-position/?trackid=10&utm_source=the-jobs-service)

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG - SHENZHEN



Associate Lecturer (Education Focused), Exercise Science (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/listing/326747/associate-lecturer-education-focused-exercise-science/?trackid=10&utm_source=the-jobs-service)

UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY



Visiting Professor (SSHSPH) (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/listing/326718/visiting-professor-sshsp-/?trackid=10&utm_source=the-jobs-service)

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE



Senior Lecturer in the Centre for Applied English Studies (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/listing/326758/senior-lecturer-in-the-centre-for-applied-english-studies/?trackid=10&utm_source=the-jobs-service)

THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG



[See all jobs \(/www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/listings/\)](https://www.timeshighereducation.com/unijobs/listings/)

[Get personalised jobs \(/the_user/165988/profile-career\)](/the_user/165988/profile-career)

How digital courses can teach skills for employability and increase student satisfaction

(/hub/coursera/p/teaching-skills-employability-and-increasing-student-satisfaction)

Teaching skills for employability and increasing student satisfaction (/hub/coursera/p/teaching-skills-

By using the THE website you agree to our use of cookies as described in our cookie policy (/cookie-policy).

employability-and-increasing-student-satisfaction)

As remote and digital learning becomes an intrinsic part of the university experience, institutions must improve their online offering

Promoted by Coursera
SPONSORED

ADVERTISEMENT



timelyMD

Virtual Health and Well-Being
for Student:

Request a Quo

Close

[FAQs \(/faqs/general-faqs\)](/faqs/general-faqs)

[Contact us \(/contact-us\)](/contact-us)

[About us \(/about-us\)](/about-us)

[Work for THE \(/about-us/work-for-the\)](/about-us/work-for-the)

[Write for THE \(/write-times-higher-education\)](/write-times-higher-education)

[Terms & conditions \(/terms-and-conditions\)](/terms-and-conditions)

By using the THE website you agree to our use of cookies as described in our cookie policy (/cookie-policy).

[Cookie policy \(/cookie-policy\)](/cookie-policy)

[Accessibility statement \(/content/online-accessibility-statement\)](/content/online-accessibility-statement)

[THE Connect \(/our-partners\)](/our-partners)

[Media Centre \(/media-centre\)](/media-centre)

[Modern slavery statement \(/about-us/modern-slavery-act-2015\)](/about-us/modern-slavery-act-2015)

[English \(/news/lawmakers-push-allow-guns-us-university-campuses\)](/news/lawmakers-push-allow-guns-us-university-campuses)

[Simplified Chinese \(简体中文\) \(/cn/news/lawmakers-push-allow-guns-us-university-campuses\)](/cn/news/lawmakers-push-allow-guns-us-university-campuses)

Copyright © 2023 THE - Times Higher Education

Subscribe

If you like what you're reading online, why not take advantage of our subscription and get unlimited access to all of *Times Higher Education's* content?

You'll get full access to our website, print and digital editions.

[Subscribe \(/store\)](/store)



By using the THE website you agree to our use of cookies as described in our cookie policy (</cookie-policy>).