

## **Lawmakers meet in Lakeview on concealed carry**

*by Matt Simonette*

2013-12-31

State lawmakers held a panel Dec. 30 at 19th district police headquarters, 850 W. Addison, to discuss HB 183, the state's concealed carry law, with business owners and community members.

State Reps. Sara Feigenholtz and Ann Williams took part in the discussion, as did Senate President John Cullerton.

All three representatives acknowledged that the upcoming legislation is cumbersome and unwieldy, especially in terms of delineating where firearms may or may not be taken. But Cullerton explained that the law came about under hurried circumstances.

In Dec. 2012, a federal appeals court struck down the state's ban on carrying concealed weapons. Illinois—the last state without a concealed carry law—was given 180 days to put a law regulating concealed firearms into place, or risk having the ban end without there being any regulation whatsoever. The bill passed last July.

Without the bill, Cullerton said, "Illinois would be like the wild west."

He added that the resulting legislation was a compromise involving gun control interest groups as well as the National Rifle Association. "There are parts of it I don't like and that I'm certainly interested in changing," Cullerton said.

Williams reminded the audience that Illinois has not only dense urban areas but numerous rural areas as well, and myriad residents with differing attitudes about firearms.

"It was a real challenge to craft a bill that would take into account public safety and the needs of the very diverse parts of our state," Williams said.

Property owners are responsible for determining whether guns are permitted in a business, not the business owner if they are leasing their space. Glenn Keefer, owner of Keefer's Restaurant, 20 W. Kinzie Ave., and a member of the board of the Illinois Restaurant Association, said that he initially had an addendum attached to his lease to ensure that a "no guns" policy was on the books for his restaurant.

The Chicago City Council voted to ban firearms in restaurants in September, but the new law is complicated for eating establishments in other parts of the state, Keefer added.

"If your sales of alcohol represent greater than 50 percent of your overall sales, guns are

not permitted," Keefer said. "If sales of alcohol are less than 50 percent of your overall sales, guns are permitted, unless the sign is posted."

But revenues are not a proper gauge for measuring overall alcohol consumption in a restaurant, according to Keefer. Fine dining establishments might charge higher prices for menu items, so food might account for a high percentage of total sales no matter how much liquor is consumed there.

Keefer drew both support and ire when he hung the sign at his restaurant, but had no regrets. "I see what happens when people drink. I don't think guns and alcohol go together," he said.

Williams said more common sense tenets needed to be put in place in the legislation, while Feigenholtz added that the law, as it stands, "is arbitrary for the responsible gun owner" as well.

One audience member asked why a person carrying a concealed weapon, who can pass the required training and background checks, should be subject to the discretion of a business owner. Williams answered that the background checking mechanisms in place in the state are already overtaxed and often unreliable. Keefer added that the owner, by virtue of having invested "thousands, even millions," in their business, should have the final say.

Most of the participants said the upcoming months will see a number of complicated legal scenarios play out as the law takes effect. Colleen Daley, executive director of Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, said to expect further challenges about the law's validity as well. "Our concern is if the NRA wants to come back year after year after year, and start chipping away at all these places, which is what they've done in every other state in which they've had the law."

Also taking part in the panel was Assistant State's Attorney Brandon Nemec. Among those in the audience was Mark Thompson, owner of The Alley, 3228 N. Clark St., as well as Taboo Tabou, 854 W. Belmont Ave. Thompson formally announced in October that he will be running against Tom Tunney to be 44th ward alderman.

*HB 183 can be found here: [www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp) .*