



Anthony Burke Boylan Friday March 14th, 2014, 1:20pm

## Illinois Lawmakers Hold Public Discussion On Concealed Carry Law's Potential Effects On Businesses



Business owners concerned about the new law allowing concealed weapons in Illinois got a few answers Thursday, but learned there are far more questions that will only be answered with time and court rulings.

Business property owners in Chicago can opt out of the law, forbidding even people with concealed carry permits to bring guns into their establishments. And more than 20 types of businesses and facilities can never have firearms on the premises, such as bars, stadiums and property owned by the City of Chicago.

But exactly what liabilities could a business owner face if someone is hurt or killed with a concealed gun that was carried legally? What responsibility do business or property owners have to make sure guns aren't carried into a business if they post the sign banning weapons?

"Our neighborhood is typically supportive of gun control, which is why all of you are scratching your heads wondering why you are here," said State Rep. Sara Feigenholtz (D-Chicago), one of the hosts of a panel discussion Thursday on the new law. "We won't know a lot of things until we live with the law and remediate the law because of things we discover along the way."

The event, held at Prentice St. Joseph Hospital Thursday, also was hosted by Illinois Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) and State Rep. Ann Williams (D-Chicago) along with the Lakeview Chamber of Commerce, the East Lakeview Chamber of Commerce and the Small Business Advocacy Council.

A panel considered a "brain trust" on the issue discussed a variety of topics related to the law, including its background, implementation, exemptions, technicalities to be aware of and the many questions that still surround it. The discussion was moderated by Lakeview Chamber Executive Director Heather Way Kitzes.

“I’m telling my clients to put up the sign,” said Grant Peters, a private attorney who advises clients on issues including gun liability, referring to the 4 x 6 inch image of a handgun with a red buster symbol through it, already a common site at Chicago businesses. “This law has no liability cap, unlike laws in other states, Wisconsin for example, where the amount of damages a person can face is limited in the legislation.”

A liability cap is just one of the many things experts believe will be addressed by the Illinois Legislature or interpreted by judges eventually. The body currently is considering a measure that would add churches and other places of worship to the list of places where guns are prohibited.

Further complicating matters are variations to the law from city to city. The Chicago City Council, for example, passed an ordinance forbidding guns in any establishment that serves alcohol. (The March 18 election ballot features a non-binding referendum seeking voter opinion on that issue.) In the state law, however, guns are only banned from establishments that generate 50 percent or more of income from alcohol sales. That means restaurants outside of Chicago that sell liquor can be in a grey area.

The new law [was adopted quickly](#) after an [appellate court mandated](#) the state adopt a concealed carry bill. The haste with which the law was written, passed and implemented has meant a short window for people to learn about the law and adapt to it. Illinois was the last state in the nation with a ban on concealed carry.

“This is a complete 180 for how firearms have been treated in Illinois,” said Mark Walsh, campaign director for the Illinois Council against Handgun Violence. Not only was Illinois the last state to legalize concealed carry, but Chicago had a handgun ban until it was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010. Now Chicagoans will be able to carry a concealed handgun, keep them in their homes, and even buy them as the law banning gun stores in Chicago also has been overturned.

But experts note the new law isn’t going to mean chaos.

What Illinois adopted is not a 'stand your ground' law. Gun permit holders still must be able to prove they believed they were in imminent physical danger if they draw their weapon. The law recognizes the use of a firearm as a last resort.

This also won’t mean everyone will have a gun. Brandon Nemec, an assistant state’s attorney in the legislative unit, who helped draft the bill, said no more than 300,000 permits are expected to be issued in the first couple of years, which is about 3 percent or 4 percent of the state’s population.

“The idea that you are going to be constantly bumping into people with guns in your daily lives ... I just don’t see that.”

One of the reasons people aren’t likely to see handguns proliferate is due to the restrictions on where guns are allowed. The restrictions do mean, however, that it is much more likely permit holders will carry weapons in their cars. A person going through a daily routine of work and errands likely would pass through so many places where weapons are banned, carrying a gun on their person simply may not be that practical.

A senior advisor to Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who has a background in weapons law, underscored the theme that it will be some time before all of the questions raised by the concealed carry law are answered.

“We don’t really know how this law is going to work,” said Tony Iweagwu.

Source: <http://progressillinois.com/quick-hits/content/2014/03/14/lawmakers-hold-discussion-concealed-carry-law>