

What's good for the UI is bad for BYU-Idaho

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

"... (T)he right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

So says the Second Amendment.

It doesn't say, except at Brigham Young University-Idaho at Rexburg.

" ... The people shall have the right to keep and bear arms, which right shall not be abridged. ..."

So says the Idaho Constitution.

It doesn't say, except at Northwest Nazarene University at Nampa.

Yet Sen. Curt McKenzie, R-Nampa, and the National Rifle Association have self-limited their ambitions.

They would allow students to carry a concealed weapon on campus - if that campus is owned by the state of Idaho.

University of Idaho? Boise State University? Lewis-Clark State College?

Yes.

College of Idaho at Caldwell?

No.

Their bill would apply to students 21 years and older who have undergone a minimal amount of training to qualify for an enhanced concealed weapons permit.

Its path to passage is greased by politicians scared witless of the gun lobby. It easily cleared the state Senate Tuesday.

In fact, only one thing apparently frightens them more than the NRA.

That would be the heated phone call BYU-Idaho President Kim B. Clark would place to Senate President Pro Tem Brent Hill, R-Rexburg.

Or the exchange Sen. Patti Anne Lodge, R-Huston, could expect from College of Idaho President Marvin Henberg.

To say nothing of the shellacking McKenzie could anticipate from Northwest Nazarene University President David Alexander.

Sure, these presidents would cite their own prerogatives to set policy for the institutions they know better than anyone else. But that argument didn't work out for UI President Don Burnett or LCSC President Tony Fernandez.

They could assert their private property rights. But ask Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz if the constitutional right to keep and bear arms stops at a private property line.

Besides, if this is about individual safety, why is the security of students and faculty at BYU-Idaho, Northwest Nazarene and the College of Idaho less important to state lawmakers than protecting students and faculty at UI, LCSC and Boise State University?

For that matter, why are the gun rights and personal safety of students younger than 21 less prized than those of older students? What's so magical about the age of 21? Is it because you can legally purchase a fifth of Jack Daniels?

Could it be that the parents of a 17-year-old high school senior they're about to ship off to Moscow might get more ticked off at McKenzie if they thought their son could head to class carrying a handgun in his jacket?

In fact, McKenzie and the NRA seem more concerned about getting something they can pass than a bill that actually functions.

For instance, dormitories and residence halls are off limits to concealed weapons. But if you're concerned about domestic violence, wouldn't a pistol come in handy where domestic violence occurs?

Also forbidden are entertainment venues that seat more than 1,000 people. That keeps intercollegiate athletics and entertainers satisfied.

But does a student carry his concealed pistol to class and then stash it in his car before he heads to the dormitory? What if the car is parked outside the UI Kibbe Dome or BSU's Taco Bell Arena - the type of large arenas where guns are still forbidden?

Perhaps that's what Sen. Dan Johnson, R-Lewiston, meant Saturday.

"I have a lot of questions," he told a Lewiston forum. "If it's purely a Second Amendment right, I would argue (the bill) doesn't go far enough."

Johnson was among three Republicans to vote no.

If concealed weaponry is such a good idea, it's a good idea for everybody everywhere.

Johnson may not have to wait long for an answer.

Once the NRA gains a beachhead, it doesn't stop.

First comes the public colleges and older students. Next, Clark, Henberg and Alexander - or their successors - will be standing alone while a politician doing the NRA's bidding comes after them.
- M.T.