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## **Idaho bill would allow concealed guns without a permit**

By RYAN STRUYK, Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Idaho residents would be able to carry concealed weapons without a permit under a new bill introduced by the House State Affairs Committee on Thursday.

The legislation, dubbed the "Constitutional Carry" bill, would not affect enhanced permits like those required to carry concealed weapons on college and university campuses, according to Greg Pruett with the Idaho Second Amendment Alliance.

"It won't change anything that was already passed last year," he said.

Democratic Rep. Elaine Smith from Pocatello raised concern that the bill did not require any formal training to carry a weapon. Pruett responded that Idaho residents are generally very responsible with their guns.

"Who decides when a law abiding citizen is trained enough to defend themselves?" he asked. "I don't think any of us — whether that's the legislators, the sheriffs or other citizens — have the right to tell someone when they are qualified to defend their life."

The panel voted along party lines to introduce the bill, with the four Democrats voting no.

The bill comes one month after a northern Idaho woman was killed by her 2-year-old inside a Wal-Mart after the boy took the gun out of his mother's purse.

The accident brought national attention and once again raised concerns about concealed weapon laws. Concealed weapons are a part of everyday life in Idaho's casual gun culture.

Five other states — Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, Vermont and Wyoming — have enacted similar legislation to Pruett's bill. Vermont has never required a permit for concealed carry. Alaska instituted a Constitutional Carry law in 2003. Arizona, Arkansas and Wyoming have joined within the past five years.

The state will continue to issue concealed weapons permits so that people can carry concealed weapons in other states.

Pruett said that lawmakers shouldn't expect more violent crime because of the bill.

"I would challenge all of you to go the states that have Constitutional Carry already and find instances where those things are happening," Pruett said.

Currently, Idaho's elected officials are allowed to carry a concealed weapon without a permit.

"Idaho citizens want to be part of that exception," Pruett said. "They feel that the second amendment is their permit, and they shouldn't have to get permission to defend themselves."

Last year, Idaho lawmakers killed legislation that would have removed the special privilege for state elected officials.

The bill was introduced after former Rep. Mark Patterson, R-Boise, had his concealed weapon permit revoked for not revealing an attempted rape conviction from decades earlier. But under Idaho law, Patterson could continue carrying a concealed gun without a permit because he was a state legislator.

Lawmakers will consider the bill at a full hearing in the coming weeks.

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