

Policies Addressing Guns on Campus

Ben Erwin

What Is the Issue, and Why Does It Matter?

Ensuring the safety and security of students is vital to creating a positive learning environment. Active shooter situations at postsecondary institutions resulted in [about 150 casualties](#) between 2000 and 2017. This prevalence of gun violence at postsecondary institutions, which is often viewed in the context of larger conversations around gun violence and mass shootings, has resulted in a policy debate over the most effective ways to maintain campus safety. A key facet of this debate is the possession of firearms on campus. Currently, [22 states](#) explicitly prohibit the possession of firearms at postsecondary institutions, while eight states allow individuals to carry a concealed firearm on campus. The issue has been deliberated at the institutional and system levels, in state legislatures and in state courts.

Over the past several years, two common themes in legislative proposals have been gun possession — especially who may possess and when — and gun storage. This Policy Snapshot provides a summary of legislative activity pertaining to these issues from the 2018 and 2019 legislative sessions.

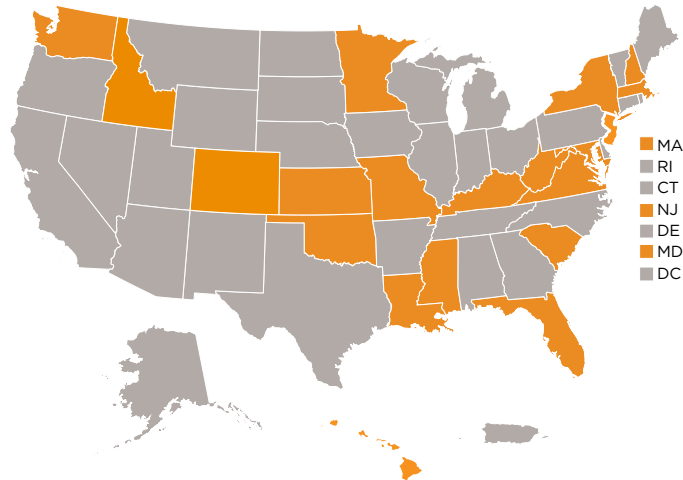
FOR MORE on recent legislative activity related to postsecondary campus safety, see the companion Policy Snapshot on [Campus Sexual Assault Policies](#).

TO VIEW how all states approach postsecondary campus safety, see the [50-State Comparison](#).

How Many States Considered Legislation in 2018?

Based on a review of 2018 legislative activity concerning guns on campus:

At least **34 BILLS** were **INTRODUCED** in 20 states.



At least **1** bill was **ENACTED**.

Enacted Legislation

Idaho [H.B. 565](#)

Example of Enacted Legislation



[H.B. 565](#) removes restrictions on retired law enforcement officers' ability to carry firearms in certain locations on postsecondary campuses.

Examples of Failed Legislation



[H.B. 1942](#) would have allowed postsecondary institutions to designate faculty or staff members as campus protection officers with authority to detain or use force against any individual on campus. Campus protection officers would have been permitted to carry a concealed firearm with a valid concealed carry permit or self-defense spray.

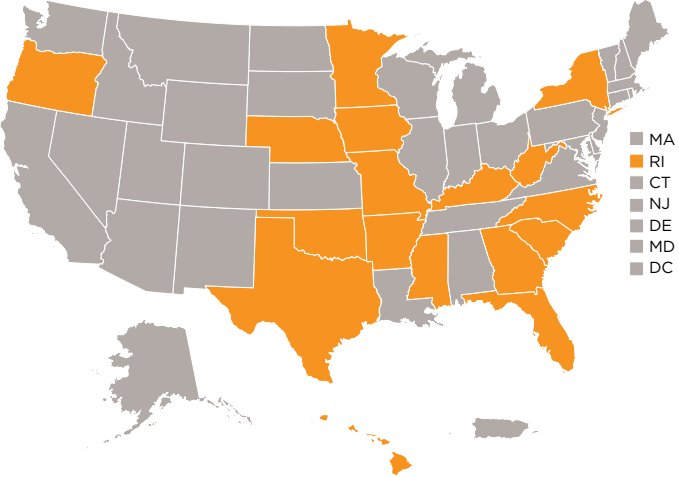


[S.B. 1159](#) would have prohibited public college or university governing authorities from barring individuals with a valid handgun license from possessing a firearm on campus, unless evidence is presented that the individual has committed a violent or reckless act. Public college and university governing authorities would have been allowed to prohibit firearms in ticketed event venues located on campus.

How Many States Considered Legislation in 2019?

Based on a review of 2019 legislative activity concerning guns on campus:


At least **47 BILLS** were **INTRODUCED** in 18 states.




At least **4** bills were **ENACTED**.


Enacted Legislation			
Arkansas	S.B. 197	New York	S.B. 101
Iowa	S.F. 188	West Virginia	S.B. 441


Example of Enacted Legislation

 [S.B. 197](#) clarifies that off-duty law enforcement officers may be required by public postsecondary institutions to be in physical possession of valid identification distinguishing them as law enforcement officers in order to carry firearms on school or institution property.

Examples of Failed Legislation

 [H.B. 5138](#) would have required that all campus police officers be armed while executing their duties. The bill would have mandated completion of a firearms training course provided by the Rhode Island Police Officers Commission on Standards and Training and included campus police officer in the statutory definition of law enforcement officer.

 [H.B. 1236](#) would have expanded to public postsecondary institutions the ability to establish rules or regulations prohibiting handguns on campus.

 [H.B. 2519](#) would have permitted concealed carry license holders to possess a concealed weapon on campus. The bill would have revoked the authority of the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education and the institutional boards of governors to restrict or regulate the possession of firearms at postsecondary institutions, except in specific locations.



About the Author

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As a policy researcher, Ben works on tracking legislation, answering information requests and contributing to other policy team projects. Prior to joining Education Commission of the States, he taught high school social studies in Kentucky and worked in education policy at the National Conference of State Legislatures. He earned a master's degree in education policy from the University of Colorado Boulder and a bachelor's degree in history and education from Transylvania University. Contact Ben at berwin@ecs.org or **303.299.3613**.

Related Resources

[50-State Comparison: Postsecondary Campus Safety](#)

[Guns on Campus: The Architecture and Momentum of State Policy Action](#)

[Addressing Campus Safety Through State Policy](#)

[Postsecondary Campus Safety](#)