



Testimony

Unified Government Public Relations
701 N. 7th Street, Room 620
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

Mike Taylor, Public Relations Director
913.573.5565 mtaylor@wycokck.org

Regulation of Guns and Knives HB 2473

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The Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City opposes HB 2473 for several reasons.

The biggest objection the Unified Government has to this bill is it eliminates the ability for cities to prohibit the open carry of firearms. The open carry of firearms in Kansas has been regulated by city ordinance since before Kansas was even a state. In wild west Dodge City, people had to check their guns with the Sheriff when they came into town. That was done by city ordinance. This bill calls for pre-empting and changing more than 150 years of law.

Cities which choose to allow the open carry of guns down Main Street can do so if that fits the nature and consensus of the community. But in other communities, people walking around city streets with guns strapped to their hips is a bad idea. There is a significant difference between rural communities and urban areas.

If a rancher or farmer comes into the local hardware store wearing a 22 caliber pistol strapped to his hip, it probably won't raise much of an issue. But in a high-crime, urban neighborhood dominated by drug dealing and violent street gangs, seeing someone openly carrying a Tech Nine pistol is a very different issue. It will only enhance a perception the area is unsafe and hinder efforts by Police to implement public safety measures and protect citizens. And by the way, this bill would not only allow someone to carry a gun on one hip, but a large sword on the other.

The concealed carry law requires a background check, a license and training. The open carry provisions in HB 2473 don't require anything. Just get a gun, strap it on and head to the grocery store. If you do choose to trample local control and pre-empt the right of cities to prohibit open carry, at least adopt the same requirements as the concealed carry law for some basic training. Whether the gun I may carry is hidden under my jacket or can be openly seen on my hip, when I take it out of the holster there is no difference... it's still a gun in my hand. Shouldn't there be basic training in gun safety?

There are other concerns. This measure places restrictions on local governments as employers which it does not impose on private companies. It prohibits the Unified Government from asking if an employee has a concealed carry permit and it prohibits any regulation of carrying guns, which may well prevent us as an employer from setting workplace policies designed to ensure the safety of all employees.

When it comes to managing hundreds or a couple of thousand employees, a local government is no different than a private employer. If you won't try to dictate workplace policies to General Motors, or Spirit Aero systems, or Sprint, or the any other company... then don't dictate workplace rules and policies to local governments either. An employer is an employer and for the Legislature to meddle in telling an employer how to best manage their business is a gross over-reach of authority.

Kansas voters adopted the Home Rule amendment of the Kansas Constitution nearly 60 years ago. That amendment is about small government and local control. Policy decisions which affect a city or county are made by at the community level by citizens elected by the community. The Unified Government believes in the Constitution and the rights of local control.

Many lawmakers here in the Statehouse express that the 10th Amendment of the United States dealing with States' Rights is being ignored by the Federal Government. I would contend the Home Rule Amendment of Kansas Constitution is too often ignored by the Kansas Legislature. Too many of you rail against the Federal Government imposing unwanted policies on the State, but then the Kansas Legislature turns around and does the same thing to local governments.