

Clancy DuBos: Pair of gun bills would not make Louisiana safer, not even in church

Clancy DuBos
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Clancy DuBos

In the face of the deadliest pandemic to hit the United States in more than a century, the Louisiana Legislature has busied itself with all things *except* helping constituents deal with the ravages of COVID-19.

In fact, a good argument can be made that a majority of our legislators have spent considerable time putting their constituents at greater risk.

Consider, for example, a pair of “pro-Second Amendment” bills that House members will take up Friday afternoon. No doubt the National Rifle Association fully supports HB140 and HB334, for the two bills would significantly increase the “freedom” to carry firearms into places where they’re currently banned.

To be clear, I’m not anti-gun. I’m an avid hunter, in fact, and a proud — but responsible — gun owner. That’s why I feel strongly about those two bills. In my opinion, both pose a threat to public safety.



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Let's start with a close look at HB140 by Rep. Blake Miguez, R-Lafayette. This bill would strip from existing law the authority of local governments to prohibit the possession of firearms in public buildings and certain commercial establishments.

Miguez's bill ostensibly promotes the notion of state supremacy and uniform statewide laws. Alas, that doctrine was not always dear to the hearts of conservatives. Just a few weeks ago, Miguez and other Republican lawmakers (in the name of local autonomy) criticized Gov. John Bel Edwards for imposing a statewide stay-at-home order in the face of COVID-19, which has killed more Louisianans in less than three months than guns typically kill in two years.

Ah, but when it comes to firearms, the state (or rather, the NRA) must reign supreme. Never mind that New Orleans, for example, has a significantly greater problem with gun violence than other parishes and therefore might reasonably need to restrict firearms in certain establishments.

Miguez, it should be noted, is an international shooting champion. As a state lawmaker, he champions NRA causes. Unfortunately, few in Louisiana share his level of expertise when it comes to handling firearms safely and responsibly. If that were the case, we'd have a lot fewer gun deaths.



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Now let's look at HB334 by Rep. Bryan Fontenot, R-Thibodaux. This measure would remove language from existing state law expressly prohibiting holders of concealed handgun permits from taking their weapons into houses of worship.

Unlike Miguez's bill, which applies to all firearms and all locations, Fontenot's bill would apply only to concealed handguns carried by qualified permit holders in houses of worship. It would leave in place general language permitting "a property owner, lessee or other lawful custodian" to ban handguns, which presumably would allow clerics to ban guns in churches and temples. Unfortunately, it would put the onus on clerics to impose firearms prohibitions rather than relying on current state law, which expressly forbids guns in houses of worship.

Christians like me typically see statues of Jesus outside our churches. Going forward, worshippers of all faiths may see "No guns allowed" signs — as they prepare to pray for God's peace.

If the NRA has its way, God help us all.



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