



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM

BILL NUMBER: HB 634		DATE: 2/22/2021	
COMMITTEE: General Laws			
TESTIFYING: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES			
WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: ARNIE C. AC "HONEST-ABE" DIENOFF-STATE PUBLIC ADVO		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: arniedienoff@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2021 1:28 PM

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I am in Support of this Bill. I would like to see an Amendment that any one who is legally authorized to own a weapon can carry in a House of Worship with or with out a Carry-N-Conceal Permit.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: KEVIN MERRITT		PHONE NUMBER: 573-301-7728	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: MISSOURI SHERIFFS UNITED		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: 6605 BUSINESS 50 W, 50 WEST			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65109
EMAIL: kevin@mosheriffs.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2021 11:23 AM
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We want to go on the record supporting this bill.			



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: MARK JOHNSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: thejohnsonm@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/21/2021 8:24 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

Please consider this testimony for HB634 and HB359 (which I wasn't aware of until it was too late to submit testimony). As far as I can tell the bills are identical. I see that HB359 is to be considered during the executive session. I would encourage the committee to pass both bills. If the committee feels it would be redundant to pass two identical bills, I would encourage one bill to be modified to eliminate additional subdivisions of subsection 1 of section 571.107. I would suggest the subdivision concerning amusement parks, which, as are Churches, private property and able to prohibit concealed carry under the subdivision concerning private property. Please disregard the testimony against HB359 by those with the mistaken belief that HB359 or HB634 would force churches to allow concealed carry. This is absolutely not true. Churches would still be free to prohibit concealed carry as private property. To those asking to maintain the current special carve out allowing Churches to pick and choose who is allowed to carry, I ask this: Why do you think Churches deserve this special carve out? Personally I can think of no valid reason that would satisfy the Missouri Constitution. Also, unless the Church employs metal detectors and / or searches those entering, the selective privilege they think they enjoy is nothing but a fantasy. Regardless, Missouri statute currently assigns no criminal penalty to carrying concealed in a Church without permission. The prohibition is both toothless and pointless. It is time to remove it.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: STACY BRIGHT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: stacybright74@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2021 1:22 PM
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Places of religious worship are considered a “gun free zone”, which means that law abiding citizens are unable to lawfully carry a concealed firearm for self protection, and which criminals know they’d likely not meet any opposition. The 2nd Amendment should carry over into churches so that an individual has the same right to be their own self-protector.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: SUSAN MYERS		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2021 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: GAIL WECHSLER		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: gailwechsler@sbcglobal.net	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2021 2:30 PM
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I strongly oppose HB 634, which would allow guns in all houses of worship. I am a person of faith and I don't want members of the legislature to dictate what my clergy can and cannot do and can and cannot allow in their sacred spaces. This violates the separation of church and state. Also I would not personally feel safe if I knew anyone could be packing a firearm where I pray and engage in other sacred acts. A close friend attended Tree of Life Synagogue, where many lives were senselessly taken and where more guns would not have made anyone safer and would not have reduced the bloodshed. Please instead focus on ways to reduce gun violence and make our families and communities safer, like universal background checks and supporting what law enforcement officers already are doing to keep people safe (not allowing more guns where I worship). Thank you.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JEAN C KNAPP		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: tjknapp1984@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2021 10:21 AM
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Religious freedom is well established in our country and state. I consider passing a law that does not allow an individual pastor or congregation to decide whether unknown people can carry concealed weapons into a place of worship an infringement on religious liberties. Many churches already have their own security team set up composed of people who they know have had the appropriate training and knowledge of the church who will respond in the case of an active shooting. It is not right for anyone to be able to carry a concealed firearm into a place of worship without the churches knowledge.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: JOEL ACHTENBERG		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: joelachtenberg@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/20/2021 6:38 PM
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Enough guns! Not in churches. Not on campus.			



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: KENDALL MARTINEZ-WRIGHT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2021 12:00 AM
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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: REV. LAUREN BENNETT		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: laurenizabethbennett@gmail.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2021 2:54 PM
THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.			

Dear Committee, As a clergy person with congregants who drive in from all over the St. Louis metro area, I do not support this bill for the following reasons: 1. Congregants with a gun are not a good or wise security protocol. People carry guns only when they are ready to use them. Church is not a place for guns. If an intruder would come into worship and open fire, most congregants would not have the proper training to be able to handle the situation. As a church of mostly LGBTQ people, we receive threats often and we have had to remove people from the building because of suspicious behavior. Because of this, we have received training from the police both locally and within our denomination to learn the best practices for active-shooter situations. In the event of an active shooter, it is much better for people to throw chairs at them or do other things like that to distract and overwhelm the shooter while exiting the building. It is far more likely that a congregant with a concealed carry permit would only add problems, delaying the tactics that actually work and potentially shooting other congregants as they are unlikely to have training for an active shooter situation. 2. Allowing people to come into churches with a concealed weapon only increases our fear of the other. As a LGBTQ church, we have people who are often new to us, trying to heal the harm done from non-affirming churches, or trying to find community. Therefore, on any given week, we can have a pretty good number of people we do not know. If we have to wonder if a new visitor is carrying a gun, that will only hurt our congregation's sense of security in worship and will likely damage the relationship with new potential new visitors if members are worried if the person is an ally or not. This only hurts everyone, one cannot worship and pay attention to each other if they are worried for their safety. And, if we have to worry about safety, that takes us away from being a ministry of care and concern to the community. Which brings me to my last point. 3. Arming congregants for church is incompatible with my faith practice and gets in the way of being able to practice freedom of religion. The reason is twofold. First, as stated above, worrying about guns takes us away from the fundamental ministry of building relationship. Second, Guns in church is a violation of Jesus' ministry, a ministry of peace and reconciliation. Can you imagine the emotional and spiritual harm if you had to kill someone who came into your church? Or, worse, if you accidentally shot or killed one of your friends at church? Simply stated, we do not need to bring violence into our churches when we are already dealing with violence outside of them. For these reasons alone, this bill has no place in our state or in our churches.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: REV. WES MULLINS		PHONE NUMBER: 314-361-3221	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF GREATER ST. LOUIS		TITLE: SENIOR PASTOR	
ADDRESS: 7423 MICHIGAN AVENUE			
CITY: ST. LOUIS		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63111
EMAIL: wes.mullins@mccgsl.org	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2021 3:25 PM

THE INFORMATION ON THIS FORM IS PUBLIC RECORD UNDER CHAPTER 610, RSMo.

My name is Pastor Wes Mullins, and I have been a Christian minister for over 20 years. As a resident and pastor from St. Louis City, I write in strong opposition to this bill. For thousands of years, we have called our houses of worship 'sanctuaries.' These 'holy places' (the literal meaning of the word) should not have governmental rules infringing on our own rules about weapons in our spaces. If my congregation chooses to have armed security that is our prerogative. If our congregation chooses not to do so, that is also our prerogative. Passing this bill takes the prerogative away from the local church and places it in the hands of the individual gun owner. Just as a sex offender is not allowed into a sanctuary (holy place) without a written plan and the consent of the church leadership due to the potential harm they present to the members present, neither should a weapon of harm be allowed in our sanctuary (holy place) without our plan and consent due to the harm those weapons present. Please do not pass this bill. It seeks to fix a problem that does not exist.



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WITNESS NAME			
INDIVIDUAL:			
WITNESS NAME: TARA REUTER JOHNSON		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL: trjpeace@yahoo.com	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2021 12:53 PM
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I oppose the passage of HB634 from the House General Laws Committee and by the Missouri House of Representatives. I don't want guns in my house of worship. However, it is my understanding the law now is that pastors or other governing groups in a church may make the determination of if guns are allowed and who may carry them. I can respect the law as it is. Let's keep the decision in the hands of the church pastor. I don't think it is infringing on mine or anyone else's 2nd Amendment rights to allow for churches to prohibit or limit guns. In my opinion, guns in churches doesn't equal safer churches. Police have a difficult time determining who is a 'good guy' with a gun and who is a 'bad guy' with a gun in some situations. The courtesy to know who is carrying a concealed weapon and therefore the ability to vet that person and extend permission, should remain with the pastor of a church. Thank you for your consideration of my concerns with HB634 and please vote in opposition to HB634.



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WITNESS NAME			
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:			
WITNESS NAME: THE REV. MIKE ANGELL		PHONE NUMBER: 314-721-7401	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF THE HOLY COMMUNION		TITLE: RECTOR	
ADDRESS: 7401 DELMAR BLVD			
CITY: UNIVERSITY CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 63130
EMAIL: mangell@holychommunion.net	ATTENDANCE: Written		SUBMIT DATE: 2/19/2021 1:06 PM

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In 2018, I helped organize a group of religious leaders to oppose the exact change in Missouri law. The Bishops of the Episcopal, ELCA Lutheran, Methodist and Catholic Churches came together with black church pastors, the Rabbinical Association and several other religious leaders to oppose this change. Archbishop Carlson threatened legal action, to take the question up in the courts if this law passes. It didn't pass in 2018. The same change was proposed already to this committee this session, and religious voices including the Catholic conference stood up against it. Since 2018, the change has been proposed at every legislative session, and has not been successful. Missouri faith leaders do not want you to change this law. Let me say why. We could, and we should, have a substantial ethical conversation about firearms in this state, but this law is not the place to start. As a pastor, under the current law, if someone other than a on-duty law enforcement officer wants to bring a firearm onto my campus, they need to have my permission. That is the current law. You need to have the pastor's or the rabbi's permission. Pastors are free, as part of their active shooter protocols, to determine who should be allowed to carry a firearm on their campus. Don't take away their authority. This change takes away that provision of the law. You could argue that churches and synagogues would be treated the same as any other business, but, frankly the law often doesn't treat religious organizations like any other business. I would argue it shouldn't do so here. As a pastor, I think someone should have to ask my permission if they want to carry a gun on my church's property. As the pastor of an urban church, which in normal times sees a really diverse group of folks gather on our campus, I value the right I currently have to tell someone "no, you may not" bring a gun onto our church property. I value that a stranger isn't allowed to bring a gun into my church, where we have evening music classes for kids and Alcoholics Anonymous groups meeting. Changing the law in this way undercuts my authority, and the authority of my fellow faith leaders. I am asking you simply, don't take the relationship out of the equation. Under the current law, if I want to authorize my ushers to carry firearms, I can. Under current law, if I want to tell someone specific, someone who I might have a concern about that they are welcome at church, but their firearm is not, I can. Don't take that discretion away from me and my fellow faith leaders, please.



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WITNESS NAME			
REGISTERED LOBBYIST:			
WITNESS NAME: TYLER MCCLAY		PHONE NUMBER: 573-635-7239	
REPRESENTING: MISSOURI CATHOLIC CONFERENCE		TITLE: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	
ADDRESS: PO BOX 1022			
CITY: JEFFERSON CITY		STATE: MO	ZIP: 65102
EMAIL: mcclayt@mocatholic.org	ATTENDANCE: In-Person		SUBMIT DATE: 2/22/2021 11:23 AM
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The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) respectfully opposes HB 634. Under current Missouri law, gun owners with a concealed carry permit are prohibited from carrying a weapon into a church without permission of their pastor. Missouri properly recognizes that churches are spaces in which guns have no place as a matter of public policy. They are appropriately considered gun-free zones, because they are spaces where we meet for worship. HB 634 changes this paradigm. It makes churches places gun owners can lawfully carry, rather than recognizing them in law as gun free spaces. Churches wishing to remain gun-free would be required to post signage in a conspicuous place. In the case of churches, this signage would likely have to be posted near the sacred space of worship. The MCC views this as an inappropriate and unnecessary intrusion upon religious freedom, which is guaranteed under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The MCC recognizes that we now live in a society where legally recognized gun-free zones will not always protect innocent people from gun violence. Churches are free under current law, however, to address these situations by establishing security protocols tailored to meet their situation. The MCC believes this is a more appropriate way to address the current proliferation of gun violence than removing churches from the list of places guns are not permitted. The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution ensures the right to bear arms, but it should not be used to justify infringing upon the Constitutional rights of others. The Missouri Catholic Conference urges you to vote HB 634 "DO NOT PASS."