

HCS HB 1708 -- CONCEALED CARRY PERMITS

SPONSOR: Schnelting

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "Do Pass with HCS" by the Standing Committee on General Laws by a vote of 11 to 5. Voted "Do Pass" by the Standing Committee on Rules- Legislative Oversight by a vote of 6 to 2.

The following is a summary of the House Committee Substitute for HB 1708.

Currently, it is a crime to board a bus with a dangerous or deadly weapon or carry such a weapon in a terminal.

This bill allows a concealed carry permit holder to lawfully carry firearms on public transportation, as defined in the bill. Anyone with a permit may also carry a firearm while traveling by bus. This bill does not apply to property of Amtrak or any partnership in which Amtrak engages.

The bill expands the listed items that satisfy the requirement that an applicant for a concealed carry permit demonstrate knowledge of firearms safety training to include, for active duty military service members, receipt of a pistol marksmanship recognition.

Currently, an applicant is not eligible for a concealed carry permit or a Missouri lifetime or extended concealed carry permit if the applicant has pled guilty to, entered a plea of nolo contendere, or been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment of a term exceeding one year or has pled guilty to or entered a plea of nolo contendere to one or more misdemeanor offenses involving crimes of violence within a five-year period immediately preceding application for the permit. This bill removes the ban on eligibility for a concealed carry permit or a Missouri lifetime or extended concealed carry permit if the applicant has pled guilty to or entered a plea of nolo contendere of such crimes.

The bill expands the list of persons exempted from certain prohibitions on the unlawful use of weapons as provided for in 571.030, RSMo, to now include certain retired judiciary members and current and former members of the General Assembly when in possession of a concealed carry permit.

The bill lowers the age requirement from at least 19 to 18 years of age or older for concealed carry permits.

The bill repeals the prohibition on the concealed carrying of firearms in churches and other places of worship by a person with a valid concealed carry permit.

This bill is similar to HB 282 (2023).

The following is a summary of the public testimony from the committee hearing. The testimony was based on the introduced version of the bill.

**PROPONENTS:** Supporters say that there is a need to carry a gun on public transportation in case there is a lethal situation in which an individual might have to protect themselves or their family. Public transportation should be a safe haven and allowing for concealed carry permits on public transportation would help ensure a safer environment. If a lethal situation were to occur, it often takes emergency services too long to arrive. Allowing concealed carry permits on public transportation would ensure individuals are able to protect themselves and their loved ones until emergency services arrive. Supporters made similar statements in regard to places of worship. Individuals should be allowed to protect themselves from violent threats in places of worship.

Testifying in person for the bill were Representative Schnelting; William W Bland, Western Missouri Shooters Alliance; National Rifle Association of America; Arnie Dienoff; and Michael Smith.

**OPPONENTS:** Those who oppose the bill say that allowing concealed carry permits on public transportation and in places of worship would do the opposite of ensuring safety. Public transit operators voiced their concern about being able to regulate riders that carry concealed weapons on public transportation. Others were concerned that public transportation could potentially cost federal funding if this bill is enacted. There was concern that riders of public transportation may stop using public transportation in fear of those carrying concealed weapons. Another concern was how this bill would affect tourism. Allowing concealed carry permits on public transportation may cause out of state travelers to think twice about riding public transportation out of fear of individuals carrying concealed weapons. Leaders of houses of worship voiced their concern that this bill would take away their current choice to allow or disallow concealed carry permits within their respective places of worship. This bill would effectively force them to allow permit holders to bring weapons into places of worship. There was concern that the bill would make it easier for hate groups to target certain individuals that have been targeted in the past while worshipping.

Testifying in person against the bill were City of St. Louis; Missouri Catholic Conference; Kansas City Area Transportation Authority; City Utilities of Springfield; Mo. Public Transit Association; Citizens For Modern Transit; Greater St. Louis Inc.; City of Kansas City; Greater Kansas City Chamber; Brian Kaylor, Word & Way; and Nimrod Chapel Jr, Missouri State Conference of the NAACP.

Written testimony has been submitted for this bill. The full written testimony and witnesses testifying online can be found under Testimony on the bill page on the House website.