



The University of Texas System
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Office of the Chancellor

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February 24, 2011

The Honorable Rick Perry
Governor, State of Texas
Post Office Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Governor Perry:

As the legislature considers the important and sensitive issue of concealed handguns on campuses of institutions of higher education, I would be remiss in my duties as chancellor of the state's largest university system, if I did not convey my concerns regarding this issue.

I greatly respect and value the authority of the legislature to make this important public policy decision, and I recognize the variety of opinions surrounding it. The University of Texas System has worked diligently to make our campuses safer, through the use of emergency notification systems and other measures. Yet parents, students, faculty, administrators, and institutional law enforcement have all expressed to me their concerns that the presence of concealed handguns on campus would contribute to a less-safe environment, not a safer one.

Additionally, further unease has been expressed by our campus mental health professionals, who know and deal with the reality of the emotional and psychological pressures of academic life, separation from family, relationships – all pressures that contribute to the harsh reality that suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students. There is great concern that the presence of handguns, even if limited to licensed individuals age 21 or older, will lead to an increase of both accidental shootings and self-inflicted wounds.

Our law enforcement personnel, consisting of highly trained professionals who work within these unique campus environments, are particularly troubled about the ability of our officers to differentiate between the bad actor and a person defending himself/herself and others when both have guns drawn. Furthermore, the high density of campus housing—which includes both persons of age and persons too young to secure a concealed handgun license—raises issues of how licensed individuals will be able to secure their weapons when not carried on the individual's person.

There is also unease that laboratories and hospitals, where chemicals and gases are not only present but often under pressure, create unique situations where the discharge of a firearm may have consequences well beyond what one may expect in other environments.

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I must concur with all the concerns and apprehensions expressed to me, that the presence of concealed weapons, on balance, will make a campus a less-safe environment. I respectfully request that you and your colleagues will weigh these concerns, and the safety and lives of those on our campuses, as you consider this issue.

I realize that this is one of many important decisions on the legislature's collective shoulders this session. Thank you for considering our concerns.

With great respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Francisco G. Cigarroa". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D.
Chancellor

FGC/jbp