

Bill Allows Texans To Keep Guns In Cars At Work

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

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By Jay Root

Texans who love guns and pickup trucks with equal fervor could soon have the right to keep them together all the way into the company parking garage.

The Texas Senate gave unanimous approval to legislation Wednesday that would allow people to carry firearms to work and then store them in their parked vehicles outside. Businesses could still keep guns out of their offices and company-owned vehicles.

But the bill, a top priority of the National Rifle Association, would no longer let employers ban guns in company parking facilities - as long as they remain locked up inside an employee's vehicle.

"Here in Texas, people like their firearms," said Republican Sen.

Glenn Hegar, author of the legislation. State law already allows Texans to carry concealed handguns in their vehicles, with some restrictions.

The bill drew criticism from business leaders, who called it an affront to property rights. Bill Hammond, president of the Texas Association of Business, warned that it could also spark more workplace gun crimes - particularly at a time when more and more people are losing their jobs.

"People could go out to their car, get their weapon and go after their supervisors or co-workers who hadn't been laid off," Hammond said.

Senators engaged in a sometimes lively debate, but - in a state where guns are generally pried away from cold dead fingers - not a single "no" vote was cast. Business groups are hoping to derail the legislation behind the scenes, but if it makes it to the House floor, passage is considered likely there, too.

The bill states that Texans carrying legal firearms, including concealed handguns, could store them in locked vehicles in company-owned parking lots.

Employers could still ban firearms from secure, fenced parking lots and garages, but they would have to provide an alternative parking area.

The bill would not apply to school parking lots or federal property where firearms are already banned.

Even in Texas, as Hegar noted, "we can't trump federal law."

Last month, a Denver-based federal appeals court ruled that Oklahoma's law protecting

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employees' rights to have a guns in their locked vehicles at work is constitutional.

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