

Simon: Comprehensive background checks a “must” for concealed carry law

Written by Kara Beach
Monday, 22 April 2013 15:00

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SPRINGFIELD – April 18, 2013. Lt. Governor Sheila Simon issued the following statement regarding House Bill 997 sponsored by Rep. Brandon Phelps (D-Harrisburg). Earlier this month, Simon’s Firearms Working Group released a 10-point legislative checklist to help guide debate on pending legislation.

“I appreciate Rep. Phelps’ tireless work on crafting a constitutional law, and I thank him for talking with our Firearms Working Group as we worked to gather information from the many stakeholders involved in the concealed carry discussion. However, House Bill 997 as written today does not go far enough to guarantee public safety.

“HB 997, as currently written, relies too heavily on the FOID process to screen for an individual’s criminal history, history of domestic violence, and mental health background to determine whether that individual could pose a danger. We know that the FOID screening is underfunded, understaffed, and unable to provide for safety within a short 30 day timeframe. We must include comprehensive background checks in a concealed carry law in Illinois.

“The working group also learned that most teachers and administrators at grade schools, high schools and colleges agree that we should keep guns out of our schools. This is consistent with the gut reaction of horror that parents feel at each school shooting. Concealed carry firearms should be prohibited from school grounds.

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“This legislation is a good start, but there is still work to do. I oppose HB997 in its current form and encourage legislators to continue negotiations. I am optimistic that we can reach a timely compromise.”

Both gun rights and violence prevention advocates urged the freshmen senators and representatives who comprised the Firearms Working Group to pass reasonable restrictions that balance the constitutional right to keep and bear arms with the responsibility to prevent violence.

Currently Illinois is the only state in the nation with a law that completely bans carrying concealed firearms. The law was declared unconstitutional in December by a three-member panel of the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and Illinois now has until June to pass a law that permits people to carry concealed guns in public spaces.

Please visit www.ltgov.il.gov/guns for additional information about the Firearms Working Group and the legislative checklist.

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