



Few liberties are as deeply rooted in our nation's history as the freedom to own and carry a firearm. When James Madison drafted the Bill of Rights in 1791, the right to keep and bear arms was placed in the United States Constitution second only to the fundamental right to freedom of speech, religion, press, and peaceful assembly. After spending 169 years as the subject of tyrannical British rule, our nation's framers understood the danger of allowing a government to disarm its people. For over 230 years, the Second Amendment has stood as a mutual covenant between the people and the government that power only derives from the consent of the governed.

Our nation has changed dramatically since 1791; however, as an elected official, my job remains the same: to uphold and defend the Constitution – that includes the Second Amendment. During the 87th Legislative Session, Texas passed 25 pieces of legislation that strengthened the right to keep and bear arms, all of which became law starting on September 1, 2021.

Out of the measures passed this session, House Bill 1927 (“Constitutional Carry”), or the "Firearm Carry Act of 2021," has the most significant impact on our communities. In Texas, gun owners can already keep a firearm on their property without certification; however, before September 1, Texans were required to have a license-to-carry (LTC) when carrying a firearm anywhere else. HB 1927 standardizes the penal code to allow any law-abiding citizen, aged 21 years or older, to legally carry a firearm without a permit. The legislation expunges the record of anyone who has been arrested, charged, and convicted of an offense involving the unlawful carrying of a handgun on another's property before the law went into effect.

Additionally, this bill also adds safeguards to protect our communities from harm. The legislation authorizes the Department of Public Safety to develop a comprehensive online course on firearm safety free of charge so that all Texans can be adequately educated on the basics of firearm safety. The bill allows premises such as schools, hospitals, and government property to prohibit firearms. This bill also makes no change to the laws on purchasing a firearm, so buyers are still expected to complete the background checks or paperwork required by the vendor.

This session, the legislature approved House Bill 2112 to address concerns over approved methods for carrying handguns. Previously, concealed firearms were required to be placed in a shoulder or belt holster. For many Texans, holsters are an impractical method to conceal a firearm, and would prefer to secure their firearms in their purses or bags. HB 2112 removes the outdated requirements from the legal code so any law-abiding Texan can conceal carry without purchasing a holster.

As new laws come into effect, some are being disputed in court, with the most contested legislation being House Bill 957. HB 957, or the "The Hearing Protection Act," affirms Texas'

right to regulate intrastate commerce of firearm suppressors without federal intervention. Hunters across the state use suppressors and mufflers to protect themselves and their fellow Texans' hearing without requiring external hearing protection. The law states that any suppressor manufactured and distributed in the State of Texas, that remains within state lines, is not subject to federal regulation which requires suppressors to be registered with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) alongside a \$200 registration fee.

Since the legislation took effect, the ATF has warned Texas firearm dealers that federal law still stands, and the United States will pursue legal action on any citizen found in violation. According to federal law, possession of an unregulated suppressor carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison and/or up to \$250,000 in fines. At this time, I ask all Texans exercise caution when purchasing unregulated suppressors until HB 957 is litigated in court.

In House District 60, you would be hard pressed to find anyone who does not know the story of Jack Wilson, the hero who stopped the West Freeway Church of Christ shooting, and now serves as a Hood County Commissioner. Jack Wilson's heroic action admirably demonstrates the positive impact on public safety of a "good man with a gun."

I was proud to co-author the many new laws in the 87th Legislative session that strengthened our Second Amendment rights. Unfortunately, not every good bill was passed into law this session.

My office filed House Bill 2557, which would allow for retired volunteer police officers and military to serve as school security officers in rural areas. These trained volunteers could provide an extra layer of protection to our most vulnerable rural schools, that often lack the financial resources to provide security. While this bill died in the Senate, I am committed to seeing this legislation through to the finish line in the 88th Legislative Session.

As your State Representative, it is essential to make sure that the laws we pass reflect the values and intent of our founders and uphold the Constitution. The work done in the 87th Legislative Session affirms our state's commitment to the Second Amendment and expanding the liberties of law-abiding citizens. As these new laws go into effect, it is important to be kept up to date and informed on how these changes affect the right to carry.