

# State Laws Pertaining to Concealed Carry on College Campuses

By W. Scott Lewis

My examination of the laws in the thirty-six states\* that are undisputedly "shall-issue"—meaning local authorities cannot require qualified applicants to "show a need" before the applicant is issued a concealed handgun license/concealed carry weapons permit—found that fifteen "shall-issue" states leave the decision of concealed carry on college campuses entirely to each college/university. These states are Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.

Though these states contain a few colleges/universities, such as Colorado State University (Fort Collins, CO) and Blue Ridge Community College (Weyers Cave, VA), that allow concealed carry on campus, most prohibit it. Utah is the only state to allow concealed carry at all public colleges/universities, by prohibiting public colleges/universities from creating their own restrictions.

The state laws in the eleven "may-issue" states\*\*—states where local authorities are given discretion over the issuing of concealed handgun licenses/concealed carry weapons permits—typically don't include prohibitions against concealed carry on college campuses because licenses/permits in most of these states are issued so rarely. Of the eleven "may-issue" states, only Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York expressly prohibit, through state law, concealed carry on college campuses.

Of the "may-issue" states, Alabama and Connecticut are considered "discretionary/reasonable issue" states. Though licenses in Alabama and Connecticut are seldom denied, local authorities can and do place their own restrictions on licenses/permits. Iowa is sometimes defined as a "discretionary/reasonable issue" state; though, twenty-one of the ninety-nine counties in Iowa maintain licensing policies that more closely resemble a "right restricted/very limited issue" state. Though Iowa, Alabama, and Connecticut do not have state laws prohibiting concealed carry on college campuses, a prohibition against concealed carry on college campuses can be included as one of the restrictions imposed by the local sheriff's office that issues the license or permit.

The other eight "may-issue" states are considered "right restricted/very limited issue" states. Local sheriffs in these states typically only issue licenses/permits to individuals who can "show a need," such as private investigators, politicians, and persons who have taken out a restraining order against another individual. Though Hawaii is technically a "may-issue" state, concealed handgun licenses/concealed carry weapons permits are never issued by Hawaiian officials, under any circumstances.

Vermont neither offers nor requires a license for a person over the age of 16 to carry a handgun (open or concealed). Vermont state law prohibits possessing a firearm "within a school building or on a school bus" but, like the laws in several other states\*\*\*, does not specify if the term "school" encompasses institutions of post-secondary education or if it refers only to primary and secondary schools. It should be noted that Vermont has a statewide population of only 608,827 and that it had the third lowest crime rate of all U.S. states in 2006.

Illinois and Wisconsin are the only two states with no provision for legal concealed carry. Including Illinois and Wisconsin, there are 27 states that expressly prohibit concealed carry on college campuses. These states are Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, and Wyoming.

Among the thirty-six 'shall-issue' states, six states allow, without special provision, for any person eighteen years or older to be issued a concealed handgun license. These states are Indiana, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

Based on the [FBI/Department of Justice violent crime statistics for the year 2006](#), the crime rates for these six states, when ranked with all fifty states and the District of Columbia, rank as follows:

Indiana – 30  
Montana – 42  
South Dakota – 47  
New Hampshire – 48  
North Dakota – 50  
Maine – 51

Not only are Maine, North Dakota, New Hampshire, and South Dakota four of the five U.S. states with the lowest crime rates, Montana has the tenth lowest crime rate, and Indiana isn't even in the top 50%. Clearly these states' lenient concealed handgun laws are not breeding generations of young violent offenders.

The extraordinarily low crime rates in these six states, coupled with the fact that these states have a combined population of only about 10,900,000 (approximately 1.6 million less than the combined population of America's two largest cities—New York, NY, and Los Angeles, CA—and at approximately 1/3 the combined violent crime rate of those two cities) has lead Students for Concealed Carry on Campus to focus on the majority of "shall-issue" states, where the minimum age to receive a concealed handgun license is 21 (23 in Missouri).

\*Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wyoming

NOTE: Although Alaskan residents can obtain a concealed handgun license/concealed carry weapons permit, for reciprocity with other states, Alaska does not require a license for individuals over the age of 21 to carry a handgun (open or concealed).

\*\*Alabama, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island

\*\*\*For the purposes of this study, the states which ambiguously include "schools" on the list of places where concealed carry is prohibited, without defining the term, are included in the list of 30 states that expressly prohibit concealed carry on college campuses.