



## STATE OF GEORGIA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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Nathan Deal  
GOVERNOR

### **HB 280 Signing Statement**

Last year, HB 859 overwhelmingly passed the General Assembly and was sent to my desk. It would have permitted a weapons carry license holder to carry a concealed weapon into certain areas of a college campus that had been previously prohibited. While many coined it the “campus carry” bill, it kept in place many restrictions prohibiting weapons from campus.

Under Georgia law, these holders of licenses, issued by county probate courts judges, must be state residents and 21 years of age or older. They are required to successfully complete a criminal history record check and a background check, preventing those with serious criminal and/or mental health histories from obtaining licenses.\*

Prior to passage of HB 859 last year, I relayed to the General Assembly my view that the bill removed too many restrictions and that certain areas should remain prohibited from licensed carry holders. These areas included preschool or childcare space, rooms where disciplinary proceedings are conducted, and faculty, staff, or administrative offices.

The General Assembly opted not to add my suggestions into the final version of HB 859. I subsequently vetoed HB 859 and explained my position in an accompanying veto message: that while the Second Amendment guarantees an individual’s right to keep and bear arms, it is both constitutional and prudent to place certain restrictions on that right in certain places.

This year, the General Assembly overwhelmingly passed HB 280, which maintains the same restrictions that were present in HB 859. It also addresses the areas of campus over which I raised concerns last year, along with additional areas of college campuses where weapons would not be permitted.

As a result, HB 280 prohibits the carrying of a concealed weapon by anyone, including weapons carry license holders, on the following areas of a college campus:

- Buildings or property used for athletic sporting events;
- Student housing, including but not limited to dormitories, fraternity and sorority houses;
- Any preschool or childcare space;
- Any room or space being used for classes related to a college and career academy or other specialized school;
- Any room or space used for classes in which high school students are enrolled through a dual enrollment program, including, but not limited to, classes related to the “Move on When Ready Act”;
- Any faculty, staff, or administrative offices; and,
- Rooms where disciplinary proceedings are conducted.



These excluded areas represent the most “sensitive places” on a college campus. It is altogether appropriate that weapons not be allowed in these areas. I appreciate the thoughtful consideration given by the General Assembly in expanding these excluded areas within a college campus in this year’s bill.

While HB 280 addresses the rights and restrictions relating to weapons carry license holders on a college campus, it in effect may have greater significance for students who are going to or coming from a campus. Unfortunately, in parts of the state, the path to higher education travels through dangerous territory.

At the present time, assailants can, and do, target these students knowing full well that their victims are not permitted to carry protection, even those who are weapons carry license holders, because they are either going to or coming from a campus where no weapons are allowed. In recent years, we’ve witnessed college students fall victim to violent attacks in or while traveling to libraries and academic buildings, and while traveling to and from their homes to class.

A year ago, I was aware of and troubled by the vulnerability of those individuals that were unprotected as they made their way to and from a college campus. In my veto message last year, I called upon the leaders of municipalities and counties in which colleges are located, along with their law enforcement agencies, to review and improve, if necessary, their security measures in areas surrounding these colleges. I am not convinced that their response has been adequate.

Since this year’s bill is more narrowly tailored as to exclude areas on a college campus, and without adequate increased security by local jurisdictions in areas outside college campuses, I, therefore, have signed HB 280.