



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH

January 7, 2016

Dear Pastors and Priests,

In light of the new state law that enables individuals to openly carry guns, Bishop Michael F. Olson has established a "Firearms and Weapons Policy," which is attached. The policy is effective immediately. The policy bans both firearms and weapons which are carried openly and firearms and weapons which are concealed. However, the ban becomes effective only after proper notice is provided and state-mandated signs are posted.

The policy bans firearms and weapons in all diocesan locations, including churches, schools and all other facilities that are located on parish or diocesan sites.

Diocesan legal counsel indicates that since state law is not clear what constitutes "effective notice," it will be necessary for each parish to use several types of notice in English and Spanish in addition to the posting of signs.

Therefore to implement the policy, each parish must:

- Publish for four consecutive weeks the specific language in state law that both concealed and openly carried firearms and weapons are not allowed in the church and parish facilities. The two state law-mandated notices that must be printed in parish bulletins are:

- Notice one must read:

"PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.06, PENAL CODE (TRESPASS BY LICENSE HOLDER WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN) A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER H, CHAPTER 411, GOVERNMENT CODE (HANDGUN LICENSING LAW), MAY NOT ENTER THIS PROPERTY WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN.

CONFORME A LA SECCIÓN 30.06 DEL CÓDIGO PENAL (TRASPASAR PORTANDO ARMAS DE FUEGO) PERSONAS CON LICENCIA BAJO DEL SUBCAPITULO H, CAPITULO 411, CODIGO DE GOBIERNO (LEY DE PORTAR ARMAS), NO DEBEN ENTRAR A ESTA PROPIEDAD PORTANDO UN ARMA DE FUEGO.

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

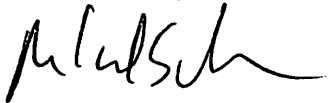
- Notice two must read:
 - “PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.07, PENAL CODE (TRESPASS BY LICENSE HOLDER WITH AN OPENLY CARRIED HANDGUN), A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER H, CHAPTER 411, GOVERNMENT CODE (HANDGUN LICENSING LAW), MAY NOT ENTER THIS PROPERTY WITH A HANDGUN THAT IS CARRIED OPENLY.
 - **DE CONFORMIDAD CON LA SECCIÓN 30.07, DEL CÓDIGO PENAL (TRASPASO DE UNA PERSONA CON LICENCIA CON UNA ARMA DE FUEGO VISIBLE), UNA PERSONA CON LICENCIA BAJO EL SUBCAPÍTULO H, CAPÍTULO 411, DEL CÓDIGO DE GOBIERNO (LEY DE LICENCIAS DE ARMAS DE FUEGO), NO PODRÁ ENTRAR A ESTA PROPIEDAD CON UNA ARMA DE FUEGO QUE SEA LLEVADA VISIBLEMENTE.**
- During the time the firearms and weapons ban notices are published in parish bulletins, announcements from the pulpit must be made calling attention to the notices in the bulletin.
- Signs containing the language required by state law—the same language that must be published in the bulletin—must be post at every entrance to the parish church and all entrances of all other buildings.
- Signs that meet the state law requirements will be provided by the Diocese to each parish. The Diocese will survey each parish and diocesan locations to determine the number and type of signs that are needed. The signs will be deliver to each parish in time for posting by the time the fourth notice of the ban appears in the parish bulletin. The expected date for delivery of the signs is February 14.
- Since state law does not allow weapons in schools under any circumstances, it is important that **each** school building be clearly marked as a school building to ensure the weapons ban in schools can be enforced.
- The specific language required by state law that is above also must be permanently placed on each parish and school web site.
- The notices that bans firearms and weapons on church property by state law does not apply to public and private driveways, streets, sidewalks or walkways, parking lots, parking garages and other parking areas.
- As required in the diocesan policy banning weapons on church property, should an offending individual refuse to follow the request to remove a firearm or weapon from a church or other parish facility, the priest, employee or usher should step away and immediately call the police. **Under no circumstances should a priest, employee, or**

usher try to enforce the prohibition beyond informing the offending individual that the weapons are forbidden. Leave the enforcement to the police or security guard.

- Diocesan legal counsel indicates that the prohibition concerning handguns does not apply to:
 - On- and off-duty law enforcement officers
 - Licensed security guards providing security for the premises
 - And clergy's residence

If you have further questions about the Firearm and Weapons Policy, please Christina Ablorh, our Catholic Mutual risk manager, at 817 945 9487 or at cablorh@fwdioc.org.

Yours in Christ,



The Very Rev. Karl Schilken
Vicar General

Firearms and Weapons Policy

The Diocese of Fort Worth is concerned with providing parishioners, volunteers, visitors and employees with a safe place to worship and a productive environment. As such, the Diocese of Fort Worth expressly prohibits any and all acts or threats of violence by or against anyone on Parish, School or other Diocesan (“Diocesan”) facilities.

In addition, the Diocese of Fort Worth strictly prohibits the possession of, exhibiting or threatening to exhibit or to use, or use of any and all weapons, including firearms, on Diocesan premises by anyone whether licensed or unlicensed and whether concealed or visible. Parishioners, volunteers, students and employees are further prohibited from the possession of, exhibiting or threatening to exhibit or to use, or the use of any and all weapons while conducting business on behalf of the Parish/School/Diocese off of Diocesan premises.

All Diocesan locations are required to provide the statutory notice prohibiting bringing concealed weapons and openly carried weapons onto the Diocesan property. The notice must be posted at each building entrance, on Diocesan locations’ websites (including homepages of parishes and schools), and annually in published literature (i.e. parish bulletin, school newsletter).

Rationale:

In 1996, the Texas Legislature approved the carrying of concealed handguns, but the law prohibited them from being carried on Church and School premises. In 2016, the law was amended to allow the open carry of handguns and the statute left the prohibitions in place. However, for the law to take effect on Diocesan property effective notice must be given.

| Specific Information | |
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| <i>Effective Notice</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Diocesan locations must post a minimum of two signs at every entrance. • All Diocesan locations must post a notice on the homepage of their website • Annually, all Diocesan locations must publish a notice in their literature (i.e. bulletin, school newsletter) |
| <i>Sign Requirements</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs must contain the required language in both English and Spanish. • Signs must appear in contrasting colors (black and white recommended). • Signs must be printed with block letters that are at least one inch in height. • Signs must be displayed in a conspicuous manner clearly visible to the public at each entrance to the buildings. • A minimum of two signs must be posted at each entrance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The first sign must read “PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.06, PENAL CODE (TRESPASS BY LICENSE HOLDER WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN) A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER H, CHAPTER 411, GOVERNMENT CODE (HANDGUN LICENSING LAW), MAY NOT ENTER THIS PROPERTY WITH A CONCEALED HANDGUN. |

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| | <p style="text-align: center;">CONFORME A LA SECCIÓN 30.06 DEL CÓDIGO PENAL (TRASPASAR PORTANDO ARMAS DE FUEGO) PERSONAS CON LICENCIA BAJO DEL SUBCAPITULO H, CAPITULO 411, CODIGO DE GOBIERNO (LEY DE PORTAR ARMAS), NO DEBEN ENTRAR A ESTA PROPIEDAD PORTANDO UN ARMA DE FUEGO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The second sign must read “PURSUANT TO SECTION 30.07, PENAL CODE (TRESPASS BY LICENSE HOLDER WITH AN OPENLY CARRIED HANDGUN), A PERSON LICENSED UNDER SUBCHAPTER H, CHAPTER 411, GOVERNMENT CODE (HANDGUN LICENSING LAW), MAY NOT ENTER THIS PROPERTY WITH A HANDGUN THAT IS CARRIED OPENLY. <p style="text-align: center;">DE CONFORMIDAD CON LA SECCIÓN 30.07, DEL CÓDIGO PENAL (TRASPASO DE UNA PERSONA CON LICENCIA CON UNA ARMA DE FUEGO VISIBLE), UNA PERSONA CON LICENCIA BAJO EL SUBCAPÍTULO H, CAPÍTULO 411, DEL CÓDIGO DE GOBIERNO (LEY DE LICENCIAS DE ARMAS DE FUEGO), NO PODRÁ ENTRAR A ESTA PROPIEDAD CON UNA ARMA DE FUEGO QUE SEA LLEVADA VISIBLEMENTE.</p> |
| <i>Website publication</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All Diocesan locations are required to have the statutory language, as detailed above, in both English and Spanish, posted on the homepage of their website. |
| <i>Bulletin Announcements</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At least annually, each location must publish in its bulletin, newsletter, or other publication that firearms and weapons are prohibited from Diocesan locations. The publication must include, in English and Spanish, the language required to be posted on the signs, as detailed above. |
| <i>Incident Procedure</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Should someone discover an individual carrying a gun while on Diocesan premises, someone should inform the nearest employee, usher, security guard, or priest. ● The employee, priest, or usher should (calmly and kindly) inform the individual that carrying a firearm, even if they are a license holder, is forbidden on the property. The individual must leave the premises immediately and may return without the firearm or weapon. The individual may leave it in their car in the parking lot. ● Should the offending individual refuse to follow the request, the priest, employee, or usher should step away and immediately call the police. Under no circumstances should a priest, employee, or usher try to enforce the prohibition beyond informing the offending individual that the weapons are forbidden. Leave the enforcement to the police or security guard. |