



Multiple Texas-based stakeholders have objected to permitless carry on an ongoing basis - especially law enforcement. This is one of the primary reasons permitless carry bills were killed in previous sessions before ever coming to the floor of either chamber for a vote.

This session is no different. Here is a fairly comprehensive list of the groups that have opposed permitless carry of handguns during the 2021 Texas legislative session.

- Texas League of Women Voters
- Texas Municipal Police Association
- Texas Police Chiefs Association
- License to Carry Instructors
- Faith Leaders, including the Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops and other Episcopal and Catholic faith leaders
- The Metropolitan Organization
- Moms Demand Action
- Everytown for Gun Safety
- Giffords Courage
- Brady
- Texas Gun Sense
- March for our Lives
- Students Demand Action
- NAMI Texas (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
- Domestic violence shelters from around the state
- Newspapers from around the state, including Houston, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, Longview, Waco, and Amarillo.

According to recent polling, >80% of Texans support the current permitting system, which requires a person to pass a background check and take firearm training to carry a handgun in public. For years a majority of Republicans, Democrats and Independents, including gun owners, have all supported the current permitting system in polls and a solid majority of Texans continue to oppose permitless carry to this day.

During the 2021 session, Moms Demand Action supporters alone placed nearly 6,500 calls to elected Texas officials opposing permitless carry and sent over 4,500 emails. Other groups mobilized calls, emails and social media contact as well, including Texas Gun Sense, The Metropolitan Organization and League of Women Voters of Texas.

Moms Demand Action volunteers have conducted many interviews about the dangers of permitless carry by phone, at the capitol, in-person and from their homes via Zoom this year. Volunteers have also submitted more than 25 Letters to the Editor and Opinion essays against permitless carry bills to newspapers and online media across the state, as Moms Demand Action volunteers and as themselves.

This is not the first legislative session in which gun rights groups have pushed forward an extremist agenda despite consistent opposition from stakeholders. In 2017, law enforcement

agencies including CLEAT, the Dallas County Sheriff's Office, and the Houston Police Department opposed permitless carry legislation, pointing out that it would make the jobs of officers more difficult and potentially aggravate already dangerous situations. The Texas Association of Business also voiced their opposition to the bill.

The contrast between those who support permitless carry and those who oppose could not be more stark. Members of groups such as Gun Owners of America arrived at the Capitol to testify in support of this legislation wearing shirts that read "Victory or Death" on the back, many with their firearms visibly holstered. Their testimonies often included references to their "God-given right" to carry a gun anywhere without any common-sense public safety laws and unfounded claims that more guns make us safer.

The push behind extremist legislation such as permitless carry is fraught with a history of threats and intimidation. In 2019, gun rights extremists went to the home of House Speaker Bonnen and other prominent House members to bully them into supporting their agenda. This was not unlike the actions of gun extremists who, in 2015, threatened and intimidated a State Representative at his Capitol office, prompting the House to allow members to bill the state to install panic buttons in their offices.

Despite an outpouring of opposition from voters, law enforcement, and stakeholders, some Texas lawmakers have sided with extremist groups rather than common sense, often using false narratives to back up their position. During the House hearing for permitless carry last month, HB 1927's author Matt Schaefer argued his bill under the pretense that it will make women safer. In actuality, women in domestic violence situations are five times more likely to be killed when a gun is present. During the hours-long hearing, not a single female lawmaker spoke in favor of this legislation.

This session, the Texas Legislature has doubled down on their efforts to suppress the voices of Texans who represent the majority of the state in opposing dangerous, extreme gun bills. From committee hearings that stretched 18 hours, to outright lying to constituent gun violence survivors, to inviting debunked researcher John Lott as an "expert witness," Texas lawmakers have shown their contempt for gun safety advocates in ways both subtle and flagrant. House Member Brooks Langraf repeatedly lied to the sister of Joey Griffith, who was killed in the Midland-Odessa spree shooting, by assuring her via text that he would work to stop Permitless Carry - he was, in fact, an author of one of the 4 Permitless bills in the House. When confronted by his constituent, he blocked further contact. The House Homeland Security and Public Safety Committee heard police reform and Permitless Carry bills in a marathon hearing that began at 10:00am and ended after 5AM the next morning. Gun safety advocates had been in attendance for over 12 hours by the time that Permitless Carry bills were brought to the dais after 11pm.

Gun violence prevention should not be a partisan issue, but in the Texas Legislature it has become a deeply divisive issue along party lines. Republican members often assign gun safety advocacy meetings to interns or outright refuse to schedule meetings at all. For working Texans with families, attending hearings is onerous at best and impossible for most. For advocates who

are able to attend to testify, it means finding childcare or eldercare, taking time away from work, planning travel, sitting for hours in hearing rooms filled with openly armed individuals, and being overtly dismissed by the legislators who are elected to serve us. The system is deeply flawed and excludes or discourages Texans from advocating for themselves and their families.

The rate of gun deaths in Texas has increased 16% from 2010 to 2019. This represents an increase of 969 gun deaths over this period in Texas. Our rate of gun suicide increased 9% and gun homicide increased 27% from 2010 to 2019. These numbers have gone up as the GOP-run Texas Legislature has weakened gun laws every session - including open carry, campus carry, arming of school personnel, reduced training hours and fees and expansion of places to legally carry. Texans do not want to eliminate background checks and minimal training requirements for carrying loaded handguns in public.

Make no mistake: permitless carry is reckless, dangerous, and out of step.

Signed,

Nicole Golden - Austin, TX

Norri Leder - Houston, TX

Becca DeFelice - San Antonio, TX

Molly Bursey - New Braunfels, TX

Elizabeth Hanks - Houston, TX