

South Dakota Allows Armed Teachers, Georgia Advances Gun-Carry Rights

South Dakota school districts could arm teachers under a bill introduced after the Connecticut school shooting rampage and signed into law on Friday, a day after Georgia lawmakers advanced **legislation** to end a ban on **firearms** in bars, churches and college classrooms.

The “**school sentinels**” law, signed by **South Dakota** Governor Dennis Daugaard, a Republican, allows the state’s 152 school districts to decide whether they want to arm teachers, other employees, hired security guards or volunteers.

School boards must get approval for their program from local law enforcement officials, and sentinels would have to pass a training program to carry **weapons** in the schools. District residents could put the issue to a voter referendum.

The law in South Dakota and the proposal in Georgia are two moves by state legislatures that aim to expand **gun rights** at a time when other state and federal leaders consider new limits following the December killing of 26 children and adults at an elementary school in Connecticut.

In **Georgia**, the Republican-led state House voted 117-56 on Thursday to advance the measure to restore gun-carry rights that have been chipped away over the years, said one sponsor, state Representative John Meadows, a Republican.

The Georgia legislation also would allow licensed gun owners to take weapons inside some unsecured government buildings, where they are currently banned, starting on July 1. They would still be outlawed from college dormitories and sporting events, Meadows said on Friday.

The bill does not specify or make any exemptions on the types

of weapons, and applies to all legal guns, Meadows said.

Democratic state Representative Karla Drenner, who opposed the measure, said it was part of a backlash against a national push to strengthen gun control laws after the Connecticut killings.

Drenner, an instructor at several colleges, said she was concerned about the impact on potential confrontations with angry students, recalling on Friday how a student once screamed at her for mispronouncing his name.

"If he had a gun, the outcome could have been much different," Drenner said.

Asked about Drenner's concerns, Meadows said, "She ought to be armed."

The measure next moves to the Georgia state Senate for consideration. Meadows predicted it would pass, based on the response he said he had received from senators.

Senate President Pro Tem David Shafer, a Republican, said in a statement on Friday the bill would be assigned to a Senate committee next week.

"The Senate passed strong pro-Second Amendment legislation of its own, and I am confident that we will reach agreement with the House," Shafer said.

Any measure advanced from the legislature would go to Republican Governor Nathan Deal for his signature.

On Friday, Deal spokesman Brian Robinson said the governor agreed with language in the proposal that would make it harder for the mentally ill to obtain licenses to carry concealed weapons. He declined to say whether Deal supports other parts of the proposal.

Editing by Colleen Jenkins; Jeffrey Benkoe and Dan Grebler.

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