
Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee

HB 1618

Brief Description: Prohibiting weapons at election-related offices and facilities subject to limited exemptions for law enforcement officers and security personnel.

Sponsors: Representatives Berg, Senn, Chapman, Ryu, Berry, Wicks, Bateman, Duerr, Ramel, Springer, Sells, Johnson, J., Taylor, Walen, Valdez, Callan, Cody, Davis, Goodman, Macri, Peterson, Ramos, Santos, Wylie, Slatter, Bergquist, Tharinger, Kloba, Pollet, Dolan, Riccelli, Ormsby, Harris-Talley, Hackney and Frame.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Restricts the carrying and possession of firearms and other specified weapons in certain election offices and facilities.
- Requires posted notice of such restrictions at election offices and facilities.

Hearing Date: 1/12/22

Staff: John Burzynski (786-7133).

Background:

Washington restricts the carrying and possession of firearms and other weapons in certain specified locations, subject to exceptions. Restricted areas include:

- public or private elementary or secondary school premises, school-provided transportation, and areas of facilities being used exclusively by public or private schools (RCW 9.41.280);
- licensed child care center premises, child care center-provided transportation, and areas of facilities being used exclusively by a child care center (RCW 9.41.282);
- restricted access areas of certain jails, law enforcement facilities, and places used for confinement of a person (RCW 9.41.300(a));

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

- areas in any building which are used in connection with court proceedings, including courtrooms, jury rooms, judge's chambers, offices, and areas used to conduct court business, waiting areas, and corridors adjacent to areas used in connection with court proceedings (RCW 9.41.300(b));
- restricted access areas of certain public mental health facilities licensed or certified by the Department of Health for inpatient hospital care and state institutions for the care of the mentally ill (RCW 9.41.300(c));
- the portion of an establishment classified by the state Liquor and Cannabis Board as off-limits to persons under 21 years of age (RCW 9.41.300(d)); and
- restricted access areas of a commercial service airport designated in the airport security plan approved by the federal Transportation Security Administration, including passenger screening checkpoints at or beyond the point at which a passenger initiates the screening process (RCW 9.41.300(e)).

Washington also restricts open carry of firearms and other specified weapons in certain settings, including permitted demonstrations, the west state capitol campus grounds, any buildings on the state capitol grounds, any state legislative office, and any location of a public legislative hearing or meeting during the hearing or meeting; subject to exceptions. RCW 9.41.300(2)(a); RCW 9.41.305.

Additionally, municipalities may restrict possession of firearms in any stadium or convention center operated by a municipality, subject to exceptions. RCW 9.41.300(3)(b).

Summary of Bill:

The carrying and possession of firearms and other specified weapons in certain election offices and facilities is prohibited. Restricted areas include ballot counting centers, voting centers, student engagement hubs, county elections and voter registration offices, and areas of facilities used as a ballot counting center, voting center, student engagement hub, or county elections and voter registration office.

These restrictions do not apply to any federal, state, or local law enforcement officer, or any security personnel hired by a county and engaged in providing security for a counting center, a voting center, a student engagement hub, or the county elections and voter registration office or areas of facilities used for such purposes.

A violation of these restrictions is punishable as a gross misdemeanor. Additionally, any person convicted of carrying or possessing a firearm in violation of this restriction shall have his or her concealed pistol license, if any, revoked for a period of three years, and is prohibited from applying for a concealed pistol license for a period of three years from the date of conviction.

Elections officers and officials must post signs providing notice of these restrictions at each counting center, voting center, student engagement hub, county elections and voter registration office, or areas of facilities used for such purposes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.