

SENATE BILL 2273

By Beavers

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 39,  
Chapter 17, Part 13 and Title 70, relative to  
firearms.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1307, is amended by deleting the section in its entirety and substituting instead the following:

(a)

(1) A person who is not otherwise prohibited from possessing a firearm, as defined in § 39-11-106, may possess a firearm either openly or concealed.

(2) A person who is not otherwise prohibited from possessing a weapon, other than a firearm, may possess a weapon either openly or concealed.

(b)

(1) A person commits an offense who possesses a firearm, as defined in § 39-11-106, and:

(A) Has been convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense as defined in § 40-14-109(a) and is still subject to the disabilities of the conviction; or

(B) Is, at the time of the possession, subject to an order of protection that expressly restricts the individual's possession of a firearm.

(2) Subdivision (b)(1)(A) shall not apply to any individual whose civil rights have been restored:

(A) Under Tennessee law by order of restoration, acquittal, expungement, or pardon; or

(B) By the law in the jurisdiction which originally entered the plea or conviction if the plea or conviction did not occur in this state.

(3) If the person is licensed as a federal firearms dealer or a responsible party under a federal firearms license, the determination of whether the person possesses firearms that constitute the business inventory under the federal license shall be determined based upon the applicable federal statutes or the rules, regulations, official letters, rulings, and publications of the bureau of alcohol, tobacco, firearms, and explosives.

(4) For purposes of this section, a person does not possess a firearm, including, but not limited to, firearms registered under the National Firearms Act, compiled at 26 U.S.C. § 5801 et seq., if:

(A) The firearm is in a safe or similar container that is securely locked and to which the person does not have the combination, keys, or other means of normal access; or

(B) The firearm is not in the actual possession of the person.

(5) A violation of subdivision (b)(1) is a Class A misdemeanor, and each violation constitutes a separate offense.

(c)

(1) A person commits an offense who possesses a firearm, as defined in § 39-11-106, and has been convicted of a dangerous felony, as defined in § 39-17-1324(i)(1).

(2) Subdivision (c)(1) shall not apply to any individual whose civil rights have been restored:

(A) Under Tennessee law by order of restoration, acquittal, expungement, or pardon; or

(B) By the law in the jurisdiction that originally entered the plea or conviction if the plea or conviction did not occur in this state.

(3) An offense under subdivision (c)(1) is a Class E felony.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1308, is amended by deleting the section in its entirety.

SECTION 3. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1309, is amended by deleting the section in its entirety and substituting instead the following:

(a) As used in this section, "weapon of like kind" includes razors and razor blades, except those used solely for personal shaving, and any sharp pointed or edged instrument, except unaltered nail files and clips and tools used solely for preparation of food, instruction, and maintenance.

(b)

(1) It is an offense for any person to possess or carry, whether openly or concealed, with the intent to go armed, any firearm, explosive, explosive weapon, bowie knife, hawk bill knife, ice pick, dagger, slingshot, leaded cane, switchblade knife, blackjack, knuckles, or any other weapon of like kind, not used solely for instructional or school-sanctioned ceremonial purposes, in any public school building or bus, on any public school campus, grounds, recreation area, athletic field, or any other property owned or primarily operated by any public school.

(2) A violation of subdivision (b)(1) is a Class E felony.

(c)

(1)

(A) It is an offense for any person to possess or carry, whether openly or concealed, any firearm, not used solely for instructional or school-sanctioned ceremonial purposes, in any public school building or bus, on any public or private school campus, grounds, recreation area,

athletic field, or any other property primarily owned or operated by any public school.

(B) It is not an offense under this subsection (c) for a nonstudent adult to possess a firearm, if the firearm is contained within a private vehicle operated by the adult and is not handled by the adult, or by any other person acting with the expressed or implied consent of the adult, while the vehicle is on school property.

(2) A violation of subdivision (c)(1) is a Class B misdemeanor.

(d)

(1) Each chief administrator of a public school shall display in prominent locations about the school a sign, at least six inches (6") high and fourteen inches (14") wide, stating:

FELONY. STATE LAW PRESCRIBES A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF SIX (6) YEARS IMPRISONMENT AND A FINE NOT TO EXCEED THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$3,000) FOR CARRYING WEAPONS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY.

(2) As used in subdivision (d)(1), "prominent locations about a school" includes, but is not limited to, sports arenas, gymnasiums, stadiums, and cafeterias.

(e) Subsections (b) and (c) shall not apply to the following persons:

(1) Persons employed in the army, air force, navy, coast guard, or marine service of the United States or any member of the Tennessee national guard when in discharge of their official duties and acting under orders requiring them to carry arms or weapons;

(2) Civil officers of the United States in the discharge of their official duties;

(3) Officers and soldiers of the militia and the national guard when called into actual service;

(4) Officers of the state, or of any county, city, or town, charged with the enforcement of the laws of the state, when in the discharge of their official duties;

(5) Any pupils who are members of the reserve officers' training corps or pupils enrolled in a course of instruction or members of a club or team, and who are required to carry arms or weapons in the discharge of their official class or team duties;

(6) Any private police employed by the administration or board of trustees of any public or private institution of higher education in the discharge of their duties;

(7) Any registered security guard/officer who meets the requirements of the Private Protective Services Licensing and Regulatory Act, compiled in title 62, chapter 35, and who is discharging the officer's official duties; and

(8) A person who transports or stores firearms or ammunition in a motor vehicle.

(f) For purposes of this section, a “public school” includes any institution operated by a governmental entity to provide education services in grades K-12. A “public school” does not include a building, facility, or structure used primarily for noneducational purposes.

(g) The board of directors or other managing body of a private school may elect to prohibit the possession or carrying of weapons on the campus of the school under this

section by posting signage in conformity with subsection (d) and including such notice on its contract with the parents, guardians, or legal custodians of the students.

SECTION 4. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1310, is amended by adding the following as new subdivisions:

(5) A person who transported or stored firearms or ammunition in a motor vehicle in conformity with § 39-17-1313;

(6) A person attending a function or activity at the school, which function or activity is not being conducted by the school administration or otherwise as part of the educational or organized extracurricular activities of the school; or

(7) A person demonstrating that the signage required by § 39-17-1309(d) was not posted in conformity with the requirements of § 39-17-1309(d).

SECTION 5. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1311, is amended by deleting the section in its entirety.

SECTION 6. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1313, is amended by deleting the section in its entirety and substituting instead the following:

(a) A person who legally possesses a firearm, firearm ammunition, or firearm accessories may transport or store the items in a motor vehicle while on or utilizing any public or private street, access road, driveway, or parking area if:

(1) The person legally possesses or otherwise legally occupies the motor vehicle;

(2) The motor vehicle is in a location where it is otherwise permitted to be; and

(3) The firearm, firearm ammunition, or firearm accessories, if the person is not in or in the immediate vicinity of the motor vehicle, are kept from ordinary

observation, which may include, but is not limited to, being stored within the trunk, glove box, or interior of the motor vehicle or other container.

(b) A firearm, firearm ammunition, or firearm accessories may be removed from the motor vehicle or handled in the case of self-defense or defense of another.

(c)

(1) No person, including, but not limited to, an employer, shall restrict a person's right to lawfully possess a firearm, firearm ammunition, or firearm accessories pursuant to this section.

(2) It is unlawful for an employer to impose any adverse employment consequences or otherwise punish an employee lawfully possessing a firearm, firearm ammunition, or firearm accessories pursuant to this section.

(3) An employee facing unlawful workplace retaliation may seek injunctive relief, and actual damages, and shall, upon prevailing, be awarded attorneys' fees and expenses.

(d) No business entity, public or private employer, or the owner, manager, or legal possessor of the property shall be held liable in any civil action for damages, injuries, or death resulting from or arising out of another's actions involving a firearm or firearm ammunition transported or stored in a motor vehicle unless the business entity, public or private employer, or the owner, manager, or legal possessor of the property commits an offense involving the use of the stored firearm or ammunition or intentionally solicits or procures the conduct resulting in the damage, injury, or death. Nor shall a business entity, public or private employer, or the owner, manager, or legal possessor of the property be responsible for the theft of a firearm or ammunition stored in a motor vehicle.

(e) For purposes of this section:

(1) "Motor vehicle" means any motor vehicle as defined in § 55-1-103 that is in the lawful possession of the individual, but shall not include any motor vehicle that is owned or leased by a governmental or business entity and that is provided by such entity to the individual for use during the course of employment if the governmental or business entity has adopted a written policy prohibiting firearms or ammunition not required for employment within the entity's motor vehicles; and

(2)

(A) "Parking area" means any property provided by a business entity, public or private employer, or the owner, manager, or legal possessor of the property for the purpose of permitting its invitees, customers, clients, or employees to park privately owned motor vehicles;

(B) "Parking area" does not include the grounds or property of an owner-occupied, single-family detached residence, or a tenant-occupied single-family detached residence.

(f) A person transporting, storing, or both transporting and storing a firearm, firearm ammunition, or firearm accessories in accordance with this section does not violate this section if the firearm, firearm ammunition, or firearm accessories are observed by another person or security device in the course of the individual storing the firearm in or on a motor vehicle.

SECTION 7. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1314, is amended by deleting the section in its entirety and substituting instead the following:

(a) The state reserves to itself the entire field of regulation within the state of all arms and weapons, including, but not limited to, the possession, use, ownership, purchase, sale, acquisition, transfer, taxation, discharge, transportation, and



manufacture of arms, weapons, firearms, ammunition, edged weapons, and all accessories. Any laws, regulations, ordinances, or enactments, other than those enacted by the general assembly, including, but not limited to, local laws, regulations, or ordinances, whether now existing or enacted after the effective date of this act, are void.

(b) Notwithstanding subsection (a), other governmental entities, including local governments and subdivisions of state government, may regulate by ordinance the following:

(1) The use or possession of arms by individuals directly employed as government officials while acting within the course and scope of their official duties except as limited by § 39-17-1313; and

(2) Ordinances relative to weapons but only to the extent expressly authorized by state statute.

(c) The general assembly declares that the lawful design, marketing, manufacture, and sale of firearms and ammunition to the public are not unreasonably dangerous activities and do not constitute a nuisance per se.

(d)

(1) The authority to bring suit and right to recover against any firearms or ammunition manufacturer, trade association, or dealer by or on behalf of any state entity, county, municipality, or metropolitan government for damages, abatement, or injunctive relief resulting from or relating to the lawful design, manufacture, marketing, or sale of firearms or ammunition to the public shall be reserved exclusively to the state.

(2) Nothing in this subsection (d) shall be construed to prohibit a county, municipality, or metropolitan government from bringing an action against a firearms or ammunition manufacturer or dealer for breach of contract or warranty

as to firearms or ammunition purchased by the county, municipality, or metropolitan government.

(3) Nothing in this subsection (d) shall preclude an individual from bringing a cause of action for breach of a written contract, for breach of an express warranty, or for injuries resulting from defects in the materials or workmanship in the manufacture of the firearm.

(e) Subsections (c) and (d) shall not apply in any litigation brought by an individual against a firearms or ammunition manufacturer, trade association, or dealer.

(f) Notwithstanding any law, any enactment, including any statute, rule, regulation, ordinance, or order that is owned, maintained, or used by any government entity or official that has the intent or effect of creating or maintaining any registry or database of civilians who privately own or possess firearms or of firearms privately owned or possessed by civilians, is prohibited. This subsection (f) shall not apply to registries or databases of:

(1) Stolen firearms that have not been recovered;

(2) Firearms while in the possession of the government as evidence in criminal actions; or

(3) Privately owned firearms where the then current owner has expressly consented to the temporary inclusion of the firearm in a government database or registry.

(g) All federal laws, ordinances, rules, or regulations relative to the rights of citizens, residents, or civilians within this state concerning or in any way relative to arms or the authority of this state to exclusively regulate the entire field of arms within the boundaries of this state are declared void. No state or local funds shall be expended for the purposes of furthering or enforcing any laws, ordinances, rules, or regulations

declared void by this part. No official of this state or any subdivision thereof shall enforce any laws, ordinances, rules, or regulations declared void by this section.

(h) Any person, including any entity or organization whose membership may be adversely affected by any governmental enactment, action, or omission in violation of this section, may file suit against the governmental entity for any actual damages, declaratory relief, injunctive relief, or civil rights violations. If the governmental enactment or action was a discretionary determination by one (1) or more individuals, then those individuals may be named as parties to the action as well and shall not rely on any claim of immunity for purposes of the action. If the court issues any injunction or grants any declaratory or other relief against a governmental entity in any suit commenced pursuant to this subsection (h), the court shall also award to the nongovernmental party:

- (1) Attorney's fees and all costs, including positive consideration of whether the action was brought on a contingency basis; and
- (2) Expert witness fees and expenses.

SECTION 8. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1321, is amended by deleting the section in its entirety and substituting instead the following:

(a) It is an offense for a person to possess a handgun while under the influence of alcohol, any controlled substance, or controlled substance analogue.

(b) It is an offense for a person to possess a firearm if the person is both:

(1) Within the confines of an establishment open to the public where liquor, wine, or other alcoholic beverages, as defined in § 57-3-101(a), or beer, as defined in § 57-6-102, is served for consumption on the premises; and

(2) Consuming any alcoholic beverage or beer.

(c) A violation of this section is a Class A misdemeanor.

SECTION 9. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1351, is amended by deleting subsections (e) and (v) in their entirety and deleting the third sentence of subsection (m).

SECTION 10. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1351, is amended by deleting subsection (p) and substituting instead the following:

(p) The department shall charge an application and processing fee of fifty dollars (\$50.00). The fee shall cover all aspects of processing the application and issuing a permit.

SECTION 11. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1351, is amended by deleting subsection (r) and substituting instead the following:

(r)

(1) A facially valid handgun permit, firearms permit, weapons permit, or similar license issued by another state shall be valid in this state according to its terms and shall be treated as if it is a handgun permit issued under this section.

(2) The commissioner of safety shall enter into written reciprocity agreements with other states that require the execution of the agreements. The commissioner of safety shall prepare and publicly publish a current list of states honoring permits issued by the state of Tennessee and shall make the list available to anyone upon request. The commissioner of safety shall also prepare and publicly publish a current list of states that, after inquiry by the commissioner, refuse to enter into a reciprocity agreement with this state or honor handgun carry permits issued by this state. To the extent that any state may impose conditions in the reciprocity agreements, the commissioner of safety shall publish those conditions as part of the list.

SECTION 12. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1351, is amended by deleting from subdivision (w)(1) the language “neither the department nor an instructor or employee of a

department approved handgun safety course” and substituting instead the language “neither the department nor any other government official”.

SECTION 13. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1359, is amended by deleting subdivision (a)(2).

SECTION 14. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1359, is further amended by deleting subsection (f) and substituting instead the following:

(f) A political subdivision of this state, including state agencies, departments, and local governmental entities, may not prohibit possession of firearms by civilians, if the firearms are carried or possessed primarily for personal defensive use, under this section unless the governmental entity enacts a regulation or ordinance based on one (1) or more public hearings at which factual findings are made, based on existing criminal records by the Tennessee bureau of investigation and public testimony. The entity must find that there is clear and convincing evidence that infringing the rights of individual citizens to provide for their own self-defense is necessary to prevent an existing problem with violent criminal activity in the specific public property or properties in question. However, no governmental entity or political subdivision of the state shall take any action to prohibit the possession of firearms by civilians in or on the grounds of any public park, natural area, historic park, nature trail, campground, forest, greenway, waterway, recreation area, lake, or other similar public place that is owned or operated by the state, a county, a municipality, or an instrumentality thereof.

SECTION 15. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 70-4-117, is amended by deleting subsections (d), (e), and (f) and substituting instead the following:

(d) Notwithstanding subsection (a), a person with a handgun carry permit pursuant to § 39-17-1351, or a person otherwise legally in possession of a handgun primarily for personal defensive use, may possess a handgun at any time while on the

premises of any refuge, public hunting area, wildlife management area, or national forest land maintained by the state. Nothing in this subsection (d) shall authorize a person to use any handgun to hunt game unless the person is in full compliance with all wildlife laws, rules, and regulations.

SECTION 16. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 70-4-123, is amended by deleting subsection (a) and substituting instead the following:

(a) It is an offense for any person hunting big game with a bow and arrow to be in possession of firearms during the archery-only deer season; provided, that persons authorized to carry a handgun pursuant to § 39-17-1351, or persons otherwise legally in possession of a handgun primarily for personal defensive use, may be in possession of a handgun while hunting big game with a bow and arrow during the archery-only deer season.

SECTION 17. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 70-5-101, is amended by deleting subsections (c) and (d) and substituting instead the following:

(c) Notwithstanding subsection (b), a person with a handgun carry permit pursuant to § 39-17-1351 or persons otherwise legally in possession of a handgun primarily for personal defensive use may possess a handgun the entire year while on the premises of any refuge, public hunting area, or wildlife management area or national forest land maintained by the state. Nothing in this subsection (c) shall authorize a person to use any handgun to hunt unless the person is in full compliance with all wildlife laws, rules, and regulations.

SECTION 18. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 39-17-1316, is amended by adding the following as a new subdivision (c)(5):

(5)

(A) The gun dealer shall deliver, at or before the time that the dealer transfers a firearm to a transferee, written information generally addressing at a minimum:

- (i) The existence of available information regarding firearms ownership;
- (ii) Information concerning state laws generally addressing the ownership of firearms in Tennessee; and
- (iii) The existence of available firearms training.

(B) A gun dealer may comply with subdivisions (c)(5)(A)(i) and (ii) by providing to the transferee information available from the federal bureau of alcohol, tobacco, firearms, and explosives; any department of the state of Tennessee; or any national or statewide organization that disseminates similar information. A gun dealer may comply with subdivision (c)(5)(A)(iii) by providing information regarding the availability of classes or training offered by the gun dealer or other individuals or entities. A gun dealer is not required to provide duplicate information to a transferee on successive purchases if the dealer maintains any type of record or log of previously providing the information required by this subdivision (c)(5) to the transferee. This subdivision (c)(5) shall not apply to any transferee who:

- (i) Is licensed by the federal bureau of alcohol, tobacco, firearms, and explosives as a federal firearms dealer or manufacturer;
- (ii) Is a governmental agency;
- (iii) Is a business or corporate entity;
- (iv) Is a full-time, commissioned law enforcement officer;
- (v) Is licensed by the state as a firearms or weapons instructor;

- (vi) Is licensed by the state as an armed security guard; or
- (vii) Is an individual who has a handgun or weapons permit issued or recognized in this state pursuant to § 39-17-1315 or § 39-17-1351.

SECTION 19. This act shall take effect July 1, 2016, the public welfare requiring it.