



## Georgia's New Gun Law and What It Means to You

Richard A. Mitchell

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On Wednesday, April 23, 2014, Governor Nathan Deal signed into law House Bill 60, the most comprehensive pro-gun legislation in Georgia state history. House Bill 60, or the Safe Carry Protection Act of 2014, will take effect on July 1, 2014.

According to Governor Deal, the new law “will protect the constitutional rights of Georgians who have gone through a background check to legally obtain a Georgia Weapons Carry License.” Currently, roughly 500,000 Georgia citizens have a permit of this kind, which represents approximately 5% of the Georgia population.

So, what does this mean to you? If you own or operate a bar, church or school, it could have a significant impact on your operations.

House Bill 60 -- which opponents nicknamed the “guns everywhere bill” -- specifies where Georgia residents, who have concealed carry permits, can carry their weapons. Under the new law, licensed gun owners can now take guns into some bars, churches, and school zones, as well as governmental buildings and certain parts of airports.

**Bars.** Before the new law, gun owners were not allowed to bring their firearms into bars unless the bar owner specifically allowed it. Now, under the Safe Carry Protection Act, the emphasis is reversed – like any other retail establishment, patrons can bring guns into the establishment unless the owner specifically excludes it.

**Churches.** With respect to churches, church leaders will now be able to decide whether to allow their congregations to bring guns into their buildings. Before the new law takes effect, bringing guns into houses of worship is illegal. Under the Safe Carry Protection Act, if a gun license holder brings a gun into church against the wishes of that church’s leaders, the gun owner will be fined \$100. If a non-license holder brings a gun to that same church, he or she will be guilty of a misdemeanor.

**Schools.** Under the new law, local school boards will now be allowed to vote on whether they want to let teachers and other members of the school’s staff bring guns on campus. If they so choose, staff members wishing to carry firearms on campus will go through training that includes judgment pistol shooting, marksmanship, and a review of Georgia’s laws about shooting people to defend oneself and others. Before the new law, a licensed owner could bring a gun to school only if an authorized official of the school gave permission.

Clearly, under the Safe Carry Protection Act, the right to carry firearms in Georgia has been greatly expanded. If you would like additional information about the new law and how it may impact your business, or if you have any questions about the new law, please contact [Richard A. Mitchell](#)<sup>1</sup> or any member of Arnall Golden Gregory LLP’s Litigation Team.

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