

Assembly approves lowering concealed-carry age to 18, passes 4 other gun-related bills

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Assembly Republicans today approved lowering the age to obtain a concealed carry permit, allowing those with a license to have a weapon in the car on school grounds and to require comprehensive firearm education in Wisconsin high schools.

Lawmakers in separate voice votes approved five gun-related bills Republicans say would protect Wisconsinites' constitutional rights. Dems decried the combined impact of the bills, saying it would put more guns in Wisconsin schools and could lead to 18-year-olds storing weapons in their cars while at school.

Rep. Lee Snodgrass, D-Appleton, raised issues with AB 498 and federal law that bans those under 21 from purchasing handguns from federally licensed firearm dealers, who are required to perform background checks. Wisconsin state law allows those under 21 to own a handgun, but the federal law means they would have to purchase the gun in a private sale, which does not require any background checks.

Snodgrass said that could lead to an increase in teenagers who could not pass a background check carrying concealed handguns across the state.

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“So I don’t know about you, but I don’t want to make it possible for an 18-year-old senior who is maybe having a fight with his friend or had a bad day at football practice, or is stressed out ... I do not want that young person to be able to have a firearm on school property, at a practice, at a restaurant where they’re fighting with their girlfriend.”

Rep. Shae Sortwell, R-Two Rivers and author of AB 498, in a floor speech said Dems opposed to the measure to lower the age to carry concealed firearms want to ensure young adults are stripped of more than just their 2nd Amendment rights.

“It’s also about the 14th Amendment too, equality under the law,” he said. “18, 19 and 20-year-old adults are not committing some sort of crime where we should deny their rights.”

He added Dems voting against the bill are showing their ageism by granting gun rights to some adults and not others.

Under current law, an applicant for a concealed carry permit has to be 21. It is also currently a class I felony to possess a firearm on school grounds. AB 495 would allow those with a license to have a firearm in a vehicle on school grounds.

Attorneys familiar with the legislation told WisPolitics.com an 18-year-old student who is a concealed carry licensee could conceivably carry a firearm in his or her motor vehicle on school grounds, whether unloaded or loaded, if AB 495 and AB 498 were to become law.

Meanwhile, AB 843 would require the state superintendent to work with the Department of Natural Resources, law enforcement and an organization that specializes in firearm safety to develop a firearm education course for high school students.

The bill would require a school board that elects not to offer a firearm education or hunter safety course to adopt a resolution confirming that decision. Those that offer the course would be required to have someone who demonstrates proof of training in firearm safety to teach the course.

The Assembly also approved 597, which would allow someone with a concealed carry permit to carry a firearm in a place of worship located on the same grounds of a school. Because of the current ban on carrying a concealed weapon on school property, those with a permit currently aren’t allowed to carry in churches that share land with a school.

The bill would require a place of worship to have a written policy that allows those licensed to carry a concealed weapon if they comply with its terms.

The chamber also approved AB 518, which would allow anyone licensed in another

state to carry a concealed weapon in Wisconsin. Currently, the state Department of Justice is required to keep a list of states that perform background checks on applicants before issuing a license. Only those licensed in states on the list are allowed to carry a concealed weapon in Wisconsin. The measure passed in a voice vote.