

DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC AND EURASIAN STUDIES

Statement on Pending Texas Senate Bill 11 and Its Implementation
October 26, 2015

We, the faculty, staff, and emeriti of the Department of Slavic and Eurasian Studies, strenuously oppose the implementation of Senate Bill 11 (also known as the “campus carry” law). We urge the Task Force and the University administration to take a firm stand on keeping weapons out of dormitories, classrooms, and offices.

As intellectuals, we are convinced that this legislation is detrimental to critical thinking and the free exchange of ideas — values we hold dear.

As members of the UT community, we are concerned that the implementation of SB 11 will seriously undermine the university’s status in the academic community, making it difficult to recruit outstanding students, scholars, and administrators, and adversely affecting the day-to-day work of organizing conferences, lectures, and campus visits.

As teachers, we fear that the potential presence of guns in university classrooms and offices will breed anxiety, suspicion, and insecurity; it will inhibit the process of learning and seriously compromise the evaluation of students’ performance.

As scholars, we are persuaded by numerous existing studies that debunk the main idea behind campus carry: that the presence of guns in public buildings deters or mitigates gun violence; no substantial evidence exists to support this claim. The argument that the epidemic of shooting deaths in the United States can be remedied by putting more weapons in the hands of “good guys” is a fallacious and dangerous ideological fiction. It serves definite economic and political interests, but does not withstand critical scrutiny.

As students of Russia, Eastern and Central Europe, we are keenly aware of the effect of violence on behaviors, mentalities, and expressions; attempts by aggressive state powers to dictate rules to the intellectual sphere are ubiquitous in the histories and cultures we study; we do not believe that such attempts have a place in present-day United States.

As citizens, we are wary of a democracy that operates by legislative fiat, rather than by open public debate with the people whose lives are most directly affected by the law, in this case: university administrators, students, faculty, and staff. We urge such a debate, as we believe that it is the true and worthy image of democracy.

As individuals, we are not afraid to say that we are afraid. But we are also not afraid to stand against a law that promises to make fear a constant accompaniment of our work on campus.

Signed (in alphabetical order),

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