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By VICTORIA CALDERON

- Leader & Times

A new state-wide concealed carry law has municipal governments across the state scrambling to take action by exempting themselves from the law.

On April 17, Bill No. 2052 (also known as the Personal and Family Protection Act) was signed into being by Governor Brownback. The legislation requires state and municipal buildings to uphold adequate security measures as well as post signs prohibiting weapons. If security measures, such as electronic equipment and guards, are not installed, then any concealed carry licensee can legally bring a concealed weapon into any of those public buildings.



The legislation allows a six-month exemption from this law can be granted to local governing bodies to give them more time to create security plans. A letter must be dictated to the attorney general and local law enforcement agencies in order to receive an exemption.

Liberal is among several cities and counties in Kansas seeking an exemption. At the commission meeting tonight, commissioners will be discussing Ordinance No. 4411, which deals directly with Liberal's exemption from the Personal and Family Protection Act.

Currently, all municipal buildings under the city's jurisdiction are considered weapons-free, and signs are posted at entrances. However, the security isn't considered "adequate" enough, according to the new law. The exemption should give them enough time to improve the security conditions of municipal buildings; if not, four year exemptions are available with proof of a developing security plan.

According to the ordinance, there are three options available to the commission. "Section 2 of the Act requires the Commission to determine (A) whether to permit persons to carry concealed handguns in one or more buildings owned or leased by the city, (B) whether to incur the costs of acquiring, installing, operating and maintaining 'adequate security measures' as such term is defined in Section 2(l)(1) of the Act for one or more buildings owned or leased by the city, or (C) whether to continue the status quo 'no-weapons' policy until Jan. 1, 2014, for one or more buildings owned or leased by the City."

The Liberal City Commission has decided on option C, and will "further study the implications of allowing concealed carry licensees to carry concealed handguns into any or all buildings owned or leased by the city," as drafted in the ordinance.

If Ordinance No. 4411 is passed, it will, basically, just confirm the current no-weapon policy until the exemption expires. The ordinance, however, can easily be revoked for a substituting ordinance once the issue has been studied further.

Right now, allowing concealed weapons into Liberal city buildings does not look promising. The ordinance states, "not only would allowing persons with concealed carry permits to bring firearms into city buildings likely have no positive effect on safety, but could, in fact, decrease the safety and security of the staff, general public and other visitors to the city buildings."

The commission will conduct the first and final reading of the ordinance at tonight's meeting. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers, located at 325 N. Washington.

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