

Council Substitute for House Bill No. 503

An act relating to the “Preservation and Protection of the Right to Keep and Bear Arms in Motor Vehicles Act of 2008”; creating s. 790.251, F.S.; creating the “Preservation and Protection of the Right to Keep and Bear Arms in Motor Vehicles Act of 2008”; providing definitions; providing legislative findings and intent; prohibiting a public or private employer from prohibiting a customer, employee, or invitee from possessing any legally owned firearm that is lawfully possessed and locked inside or locked to a private motor vehicle in a parking lot; prohibiting a public or private employer from violating the privacy rights of a customer, employee, or invitee by verbal or written inquiry regarding the presence of a firearm inside or locked to a private motor vehicle in a parking lot or by the search of a private motor vehicle in a parking lot to ascertain the presence of a firearm within the vehicle; prohibiting actions by a public or private employer against a customer, employee, or invitee based upon verbal or written statements concerning possession of a firearm stored inside a private motor vehicle in a parking lot for lawful purposes; providing conditions under which a search of a private motor vehicle in the parking lot of a public or private employer may be conducted; prohibiting a public or private employer from conditioning employment upon specified licensure status or upon a specified agreement; prohibiting a public or private employer from attempting to prevent or prohibiting any customer, employee, or invitee from entering the parking lot of the employer’s place of business because the customer’s, employee’s, or invitee’s private motor vehicle contains a legal firearm; prohibiting public or private employers from terminating the employment of or otherwise discriminating against an employee, or expelling a customer or invitee, for exercising his or her constitutional right to keep and bear arms or for exercising the right of self-defense; providing a condition to the prohibition; providing that such prohibitions apply to all public-sector employers; providing that, when subject to the prohibitions imposed by the act, a public or private employer has no duty of care related to the actions prohibited thereunder; providing specified immunity from liability for public and private employers; providing nonapplicability of such immunity; providing construction; providing for enforcement of the act; providing for the award of reasonable personal costs and losses; providing for the award of court costs and attorney’s fees; providing exceptions to the prohibitions under the act; providing applicability; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 790.251, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

790.251 Protection of the right to keep and bear arms in motor vehicles for self-defense and other lawful purposes; prohibited acts; duty of public and private employers; immunity from liability; enforcement.—

(1) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the “Preservation and Protection of the Right to Keep and Bear Arms in Motor Vehicles Act of 2008.”

(2) DEFINITIONS.—As used in this section, the term:

(a) “Parking lot” means any property that is used for parking motor vehicles and is available to customers, employees, or invitees for temporary or long-term parking or storage of motor vehicles.

(b) “Motor vehicle” means any automobile, truck, minivan, sports utility vehicle, motor home, recreational vehicle, motorcycle, motor scooter, or any other vehicle operated on the roads of this state and required to be registered under state law.

(c) “Employee” means any person who possesses a valid license issued pursuant to s. 790.06 and:

1. Works for salary, wages, or other remuneration;
2. Is an independent contractor; or
3. Is a volunteer, intern, or other similar individual for an employer.

(d) “Employer” means any business that is a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, limited liability company, professional association, cooperative, joint venture, trust, firm, institution, or association, or public-sector entity, that has employees.

(e) “Invitee” means any business invitee, including a customer or visitor, who is lawfully on the premises of a public or private employer.

As used in this section, the term “firearm” includes ammunition and accoutrements attendant to the lawful possession and use of a firearm.

(3) LEGISLATIVE INTENT; FINDINGS.—This act is intended to codify the long-standing legislative policy of the state that individual citizens have a constitutional right to keep and bear arms, that they have a constitutional right to possess and keep legally owned firearms within their motor vehicles for self-defense and other lawful purposes, and that these rights are not abrogated by virtue of a citizen becoming a customer, employee, or invitee of a business entity. It is the finding of the Legislature that a citizen’s lawful possession, transportation, and secure keeping of firearms and ammunition within his or her motor vehicle is essential to the exercise of the fundamental constitutional right to keep and bear arms and the constitutional right of self-defense. The Legislature finds that protecting and preserving these rights is essential to the exercise of freedom and individual responsibility. The Legislature further finds that no citizen can or should be required to waive or abrogate his or her right to possess and securely keep firearms and ammunition locked within his or her motor vehicle by virtue of becoming a customer, employee, or invitee of any employer or business establishment within the state, unless specifically required by state or federal law.

(4) PROHIBITED ACTS.—No public or private employer may violate the constitutional rights of any customer, employee, or invitee as provided in paragraphs (a)-(e):

(a) No public or private employer may prohibit any customer, employee, or invitee from possessing any legally owned firearm when such firearm is lawfully possessed and locked inside or locked to a private motor vehicle in a parking lot and when the customer, employee, or invitee is lawfully in such area.

(b) No public or private employer may violate the privacy rights of a customer, employee, or invitee by verbal or written inquiry regarding the presence of a firearm inside or locked to a private motor vehicle in a parking lot or by an actual search of a private motor vehicle in a parking lot to ascertain the presence of a firearm within the vehicle. Further, no public or private employer may take any action against a customer, employee, or invitee based upon verbal or written statements of any party concerning possession of a firearm stored inside a private motor vehicle in a parking lot for lawful purposes. A search of a private motor vehicle in the parking lot of a public or private employer to ascertain the presence of a firearm within the vehicle may only be conducted by on-duty law enforcement personnel, based upon due process and must comply with constitutional protections.

(c) No public or private employer shall condition employment upon either:

1. The fact that an employee or prospective employee holds or does not hold a license issued pursuant to s. 790.06; or

2. Any agreement by an employee or a prospective employee that prohibits an employee from keeping a legal firearm locked inside or locked to a private motor vehicle in a parking lot when such firearm is kept for lawful purposes.

(d) No public or private employer shall prohibit or attempt to prevent any customer, employee, or invitee from entering the parking lot of the employer's place of business because the customer's, employee's, or invitee's private motor vehicle contains a legal firearm being carried for lawful purposes, that is out of sight within the customer's, employee's, or invitee's private motor vehicle.

(e) No public or private employer may terminate the employment of or otherwise discriminate against an employee, or expel a customer or invitee for exercising his or her constitutional right to keep and bear arms or for exercising the right of self-defense as long as a firearm is never exhibited on company property for any reason other than lawful defensive purposes.

This subsection applies to all public-sector employers, including those already prohibited from regulating firearms under the provisions of s. 790.33.

(5) DUTY OF CARE OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EMPLOYERS; IMMUNITY FROM LIABILITY.—

(a) When subject to the provisions of subsection (4), a public or private employer has no duty of care related to the actions prohibited under such subsection.

(b) A public or private employer is not liable in a civil action based on actions or inactions taken in compliance with this section. The immunity provided in this subsection does not apply to civil actions based on actions or inactions of public or private employers that are unrelated to compliance with this section.

(c) Nothing contained in this section shall be interpreted to expand any existing duty, or create any additional duty, on the part of a public or private employer, property owner, or property owner's agent.

(6) ENFORCEMENT.—The Attorney General shall enforce the protections of this act on behalf of any customer, employee, or invitee aggrieved under this act. If there is reasonable cause to believe that the aggrieved person's rights under this act have been violated by a public or private employer, the Attorney General shall commence a civil or administrative action for damages, injunctive relief and civil penalties, and such other relief as may be appropriate under the provisions of s. 760.51, or may negotiate a settlement with any employer on behalf of any person aggrieved under the act. However, nothing in this act shall prohibit the right of a person aggrieved under this act to bring a civil action for violation of rights protected under the act. In any successful action brought by a customer, employee, or invitee aggrieved under this act, the court shall award all reasonable personal costs and losses suffered by the aggrieved person as a result of the violation of rights under this act. In any action brought pursuant to this act, the court shall award all court costs and attorney's fees to the prevailing party.

(7) EXCEPTIONS.—The prohibitions in subsection (4) do not apply to:

(a) Any school property as defined and regulated under s. 790.115.

(b) Any correctional institution regulated under s. 944.47 or chapter 957.

(c) Any property where a nuclear-powered electricity generation facility is located.

(d) Property owned or leased by a public or private employer or the landlord of a public or private employer upon which are conducted substantial activities involving national defense, aerospace, or homeland security.

(e) Property owned or leased by a public or private employer or the landlord of a public or private employer upon which the primary business conducted is the manufacture, use, storage, or transportation of combustible or explosive materials regulated under state or federal law, or property owned or leased by an employer who has obtained a permit required under 18 U.S.C. s. 842 to engage in the business of importing, manufacturing, or dealing in explosive materials on such property.

(f) A motor vehicle owned, leased, or rented by a public or private employer or the landlord of a public or private employer.

(g) Any other property owned or leased by a public or private employer or the landlord of a public or private employer upon which possession of a firearm or other legal product by a customer, employee, or invitee is prohibited pursuant to any federal law, contract with a federal government entity, or general law of this state.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008, and shall apply to causes of action accruing on or after that date.

Approved by the Governor April 15, 2008.

Filed in Office Secretary of State April 15, 2008.