

Committee on Judiciary

CS/CS/HB 259 — Safety of Religious Institutions

by Judiciary Committee; Education and Employment Committee; and Reps. Williamson, Byrd, and others (CS/SB 498 by Criminal Justice Committee; and Senators Gruters, Brandes, Hutson, Baxley, Rodriquez, Rodrigues, Broxson, Albritton, Bradley, and Simpson)

The bill addresses the possession of a concealed weapon or firearm for defensive or other lawful purposes on property used by a religious institution that is co-located with a school. Under existing law, a person who has a concealed weapon or firearm license may legally carry a firearm inside a church, synagogue, or other religious institution. However, the person is generally prohibited from carrying a firearm on property that is located in an area where firearms are prohibited, such as a school. Under the bill, a person who has a concealed weapon or firearm license may carry a concealed weapon or firearm on the property of a religious institution regardless of whether the property is also used as a school.

The bill further states that it “does not limit the private property rights of a church, synagogue, or other religious institution to exercise control over property that the church, synagogue, or other religious institution owns, rents, leases, borrows, or lawfully uses.” Accordingly, religious institutions and owners of property borrowed or used by a religious institution may continue to regulate and prohibit firearms on their own property.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 24-16; House 76-37