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Sen. Campbell Files SB 535 to Secure Texans' Right to Carry in Church

AUSTIN – A day after the Senate honored Stephen Willeford, the hero of Sutherland Springs, State Senator Donna Campbell filed a bill to clearly secure the rights of Texans to lawfully carry in churches and established places of worship.

"We have learned many times over that there is no such thing as a gun free zone. Those with evil intentions will violate the law and carry out their heinous acts no matter what," Senator Campbell stated. "It makes no sense to disarm the good guys and leave law-abiding citizens defenseless where violent offenders break the law to do great harm."

Senate Bill 535 does not restrict the rights of churches to post 30.06 or 30.07 signs or prohibit weapons on their premises if they choose, which has been established law for most privately owned property in Texas.

"The existing statute is confusing and clunky when it comes to clearly stating the rights of licensed Texans to carry on the premises of a church," said Senator Campbell. "This bill provides clarity of the Legislature's intent to treat churches in the same manner as other privately owned establishments in Texas."

In addition, Senate Bill 535 reduces penalties for licensed citizens who unknowingly carry in prohibited areas, aligning these penalties with other sections of state law. It also increases the penalty for armed individuals who are told to leave certain premises where weapons are prohibited and fail to depart.

A December 2017 Attorney General's opinion confirms the rights of licensed handgun owners to lawfully carry on the premises of an established place of worship. Senator Campbell's bill draws from that opinion and mirrors its conclusion.

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