

# The Post and Courier

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## S.C. Senate panel likely kills 'constitutional carry' for the year

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Post and Courier file photo from a concealed weapons class.

COLUMBIA - South Carolinians who want to carry a concealed firearm will continue to be required to apply for a permit and receive a background check and training, an S.C. Senate panel decided Tuesday.

State Sen. Lee Bright, R-Spartanburg, hoped to advance a measure known as "constitutional

carry" that would have allowed anyone to carry a weapon - in the open or concealed - without a permit. The Senate Judiciary Committee proved hostile to the idea, voting 17-4 to take the bill off the table. The committee's move makes it nearly impossible for the bill to move forward.



Sens. Bright, Shane Martin, R-Spartanburg; Katrina Shealy, R-Lexington; and Thomas Corbin, R-Greenville; voted for the bill, S. 115.

They and other gun rights advocates, including Gov. Nikki Haley, said that more guns on the streets would make criminals think twice about attacking someone and make the state safer. They also argue that the Second Amendment is clear and grants anyone the right to carry a weapon without going to the government first.



Bright

Bright's measure also would have also made it legal for non-violent felons to buy and carry a weapon. However, there are many violent crimes classified as non-violent in South Carolina's legal code, senators said. Bright said that it wasn't his intent for serious criminals to be able to obtain guns and offered to compromise on that issue.

He never got the chance. Instead, the committee had a lengthy back-and-forth that often bordered on the absurd on what government infringement of rights means.

Bright was asked whether he considered stop signs government infringement. "Somebody's got to stop or everybody collides," he said. He was also asked whether he would support someone being able to carry hand grenades. He said that was not what the committee was there to debate.

Accidents happen in all kinds of settings, he and others said. People drown and get electrocuted, not to mention choke to death on hot dogs, Bright said. "Would it be OK if we had a hot dog eating class required?" Bright asked. He said that most people who carry guns are law-abiding and that the training required by the concealed-weapons permit is not necessary and not consistent with the Second Amendment.

Sen. John Scott, D-Richland, said the idea that anyone could carry a weapon concerns everyone, including law enforcement. "I think . more young people will be injured and killed, innocent people will be gunned down. Anything can happen."

Bright said the vote settles the matter for now. "I don't think it will come back this year," he said of the issue.

Bright said that he would likely bring the bill up again next year and give constituents and gun rights groups the summer to lobby legislators on the issue. "After this, they'll all raise Cain about it," he said.

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