

**State Representative
Kim Thatcher
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**State Senator
Brian Boquist
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Calling on Universities to Follow Gun Laws **34 Legislators Send Letter to OUS**

(Salem) A sternly worded bi-partisan [letter](#) was sent to the [Chancellor of the Oregon University System](#) (OUS), George Pernsteiner, today signed by 34 legislators asking for the state's public universities to review and revise their gun policies. In early February [a student was arrested and suspended from Western Oregon University](#) (WOU) for carrying a gun on campus, even though he had a concealed handgun license (CHL).

The letter read in part, "we respectfully request you follow up on [requests made earlier this year](#) to change the policies at the Oregon University System to allow concealed handgun owners to carry firearms on campus as allowed by state law." Under state law ([Oregon Revised Statutes 166.170](#)) only the Oregon Legislature can regulate firearms. In addition the law allows CHL holders to pack guns in most public buildings, including universities. ([Oregon Revised Statutes 166.370](#))

[State Representative Kim Thatcher](#) (R-Keizer, St. Paul, Newberg) and [State Senator Brian Boquist](#) (R-Dallas) spearheaded the letter as a follow-up to a meeting they had with OUS officials in mid-February. "The University System promised to respond to [concerns voiced by legislators four months ago](#) but so far we have not received a satisfactory answer," noted Thatcher. In fact the Chancellor sent a letter in February stating, "for the sake of our campuses, I would like this confusion resolved swiftly."

Criminal charges against WOU student, Jeff Maxwell, were dropped but the university suspension remains in place. The District Attorney involved in the case was quoted in a local newspaper (Statesman Journal Newspaper February 13, 2009) that, "even if a rule is established by the university, the state statute trumps any policy they might have."

Senator Boquist pointed out, "OUS has continued to flaunt Oregon law. For an education institute to take a position they are above the law is unacceptable." Thatcher added, "the state law is very clear; we have several legal opinions saying OUS is out of bounds and should not be infringing on the rights of Oregon citizens with concealed handgun licenses. The university system needs to be held accountable and justify their actions."

Today's letter by the 34 lawmakers concluded with this:

"As a result of this delayed action, we understand there may be lawsuits under consideration against the University System. We would hate to see protracted litigation which would come at great expense to taxpayers. Instead we remain optimistic that the OUS will modify its policies to bring them in line with state law and look forward to your plan of action. A response would be appreciated by June 30th."

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