

March 25 – By a vote of 9-2, the university’s Board of Regents acted today to oppose the current form of legislation that would allow concealed handguns and knives on campus. The resolution regarding SB 174 states that without amendments, the legislation would prevent the university from responding to common, known, high risk and high conflict situations involving concealed firearms and knives on university property.

“This bill as written limits the board’s ability to govern the university in a way that is best for our students, faculty, staff and educational mandate,” said President Jim Johnsen.

The university has offered six amendments to the bill that would allow for the Board of Regents and the administration to respond in critical and sensitive situations. These amendments include allowing regulation of weapons in the following areas:

- when a student or employee demonstrates a risk of harm to self or others;
- in student dormitories and other shared living quarters, where, unlike private residences, some 60 percent of occupants are under 21, communal living rules are enforced by student Resident Advisors and UA serves as the “adult,” residents live in close quarters and share facilities such as bathrooms and lounges, students and transient visitors have greater access to rooms, and alcohol is frequently present;
- in university facilities housing health and counseling services or other services related to sexual harassment or violence;
- during adjudication of staff or student disputes or disciplinary issues;
- within parts of facilities used for dedicated programs for preschool, elementary, junior high and secondary students, when such programs are occurring;
- with concealed carry permits, since a student or employee carrying concealed in UA common areas, critical infrastructure, classrooms and labs should have some training and knowledge of gun safety and applicable law and be subject to a criminal background check; and,

The resolution requests that legislators and the governor oppose the bill in its current form, and urges Alaskans to oppose SB 174 without the requested amendments.

“There is a time and a place to carry weapons,” said Regent Gloria O’Neill, “and it’s not on our campuses.”

The Regents postponed amending the university weapons policy, choosing to defer action. Chair Jo Heckman noted that as the session progresses there will more clarity on the final language in the bill. Postponing policy action also gives the community opportunity to comment.

The resolution and amendments can be found at www.alaska.edu/state/advocacy.