

Nevada lawmakers may tackle concealed weapons on college campuses

By Sean Whaley, Nevada News Bureau

CARSON CITY -- A newly elected Republican state lawmaker plans to push forward with a bill next session to allow students and others with permits to carry concealed weapons on the campuses of the Nevada System of Higher Education.

Assemblywoman Michele Fiore, R-Las Vegas, elected to Assembly District 4 in November, has submitted a bill draft request to prepare a measure for consideration in the 2013 legislative session.

The one-line description for the request says: "Authorizes the possession of a concealed firearm on property of the Nevada System of Higher Education under certain circumstances."

Fiore, a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association, made 2nd Amendment rights a key part of her campaign for the Assembly.

The "campus carry" issue was a controversial topic in the 2011 session, when former state Sen. John Lee, D-North Las Vegas, brought a similar bill to the Legislature. The bill passed the Senate but did not get a vote in the Assembly Judiciary Committee late in the session.

Lee sponsored the bill on behalf of Amanda Collins, a concealed weapons permit holder who was unarmed when she was raped by James Biela in a UNR parking garage in 2007. Collins gave emotional and candid testimony on behalf of the measure at the 2011 session.

Fiore cites the Collins case in requesting the bill, saying in

an email there is no reason to prohibit concealed weapons permit holders from being able to protect themselves while on a campus of Nevada's higher education system.

"In our communities today the bad guys have guns and the good guys obey the law and sometimes because of our firearm laws us good guys are put in a compromising position," she said. "That is not OK. I will not hesitate to protect myself with my handguns. If I have to make a choice between saving my children's lives or my own life or letting a scum bag take our lives, I'll choose to take the culprit out."

Collins said in her 2011 testimony that she could have defended herself if she had been allowed to carry her weapon on campus.

Biela was sentenced to death in 2010 for the murder of another Reno woman, Brianna Denison, in 2008.

Lee said at a hearing on his bill in 2011 that the decision to make Nevada college campuses "gun-free zones" actually created "defenseless-victim zones."

CCW permit holders must be at least 21 years of age and take an eight-hour training class.

The Nevada System of Higher Education and several law enforcement groups opposed the measure, however, arguing in part that the discretion to deal with weapons on campus belonged to the Board of Regents, not lawmakers.

Concerns were also cited with how to deal with campus athletic events where alcohol is served, and how to ensure weapons would be safely stored in student dormitories.