

## LEAVITT STICKS TO GUN LAW

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Gov. Mike Leavitt says he is "troubled" by the idea of Utahns carrying guns into public schools and churches, but he declined Thursday to back proposed changes in the state's concealed-weapons permit laws.

The first-term Republican said it was his "personal instinct" that there should be some restrictions on guns in churches. The same goes, he said, for letting employers bar people from bringing weapons into the workplace.

"There are areas where we need to be able to say it's appropriate and places where it's not," the governor said, at his monthly KUED-TV news conference. "But this is one of those subjects in which you can't always delineate with exactness."

"... Does that mean they {concealed-weapons permit holders} ought to have total and unrestricted access? I'm not sure I'm prepared to express an opinion on that."

Utah Public Safety Commissioner Doug Bodrero has asked the Legislature to clarify a law change made in 1995 because it appears to usurp the ability of church and school leaders to bar weapons from their premises.

Advocates for Utah gun owners, meanwhile, want to keep the new concealed-weapons permitting system the way it is.

The new system forces state law-enforcement officials to prove why an applicant shouldn't have a permit, instead of having applicants prove why they need to carry a weapon.

And by saying the state's nearly 10,000 permit holders can legally carry guns "without restriction," the revised law also appears to supersede other state statutes banning weapons in schools, as well as override the authority of ecclesiastical leaders to keep churches gun-free.

Leavitt said he does not "have a lot of heartburn" over the issue of guns in schools. "We've made that clear," he said, apparently referring to prior school bans on guns that now are in question.

On an unrelated topic, Leavitt said a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling striking down an anti-gay rights statute in Colorado has no bearing on Utah's recent ban against gay student clubs.

"Our law doesn't single anybody out," he said of the outright ban on school clubs focused on criminal behavior, bigotry or human sexuality. "It treats everyone the same."

The controversial ban, passed by the Legislature during an April 17 special session, was sparked by the proposed formation of a gay-straight student alliance at East High School in Salt Lake City.

Civil-rights groups have vowed to challenge the new law in court.