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Statement to the Senate Committee on Federal & State Affairs
Opposing SB 186
March 14, 2013
John Douglass, Chief of Police

Chairman Ostmeyer and members of the Senate Committee on Federal & State Affairs, my name is John Douglass. I serve as the Chief of Police for the City of Overland Park and provide this statement to you today in opposition to SB 186.

The City of Overland Park is opposed to the provisions of SB 186, a bill that effectively mandates that the City permit the concealed carrying of firearms in City facilities. Legislatively requiring local governments to permit the concealed carry of firearms in public facilities needlessly eliminates the ability of local governments to post public buildings with signs prohibiting the carrying of all firearms into such facilities. To do so has the effect of inviting the public to carry firearms into public meetings. We believe that the safety of the public and local elected officials and employees, is best served by local governments retaining the authority to prohibit all firearms in public facilities.

We believe that it is critical that the City of Overland Park should be able to decide at the local level, in which public buildings or facilities concealed carry weapons may be permitted. Specifically, the City supports legislation that allows local units of government to prohibit the concealed carry of handguns, this is particularly important at public venues, centered around children activities, such as the Deanna Rose Children's Farmstead, the Overland Park Soccer Complex, and the Overland Park Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. Such local control would be consistent with current laws surrounding children's activities at schools.

The provisions of SB 186 that limit local governments from banning concealed weapons in public facilities unless "adequate security" measures, as defined by the bill are provided, ignores the fact that such "adequate security" measures in a single public facility, let alone all public facilities would likely be prohibitively expensive. Depending on the size and number of public buildings and facilities to be staffed and equipped with security screening equipment, the costs to implement such a program would become significant to the local taxpayer and possibly result in a reduction in other service areas. Because SB 186 seems to somehow distinguish between certain state facilities and local government facilities, the validity of any argument supporting such standards for concealed carry in only local government facilities seems inconsistent at best. While we are opposed to SB 186, if such legislation is appropriate, the law should be uniform for all public buildings, whether at the local or state level.

Finally, we are very concerned about the provision in the bill which, as we interpret, would limit the City's ability as an employer to prescribe policies and regulations that prohibit guide our employees with respect to concealed carry while at work. As is often reported across the country, it is not uncommon for disgruntled employees to react violently to supervisors. By effectively requiring governmental employers to permit employees to be armed with concealed firearms, SB 186 places public employers and their supervisors in serious jeopardy.

The City strongly opposes the provisions of SB 186, particularly those provisions related to employees carrying concealed weapons. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. I would be happy to answer questions the committee may have at the appropriate time.