

- SUBJECT:** Use of social security numbers in concealed handgun licensure
- COMMITTEE:** Homeland Security and Public Safety — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Pickett, Fletcher, Dale, Flynn, Lavender, Sheets, Simmons
0 nays
2 absent — Cortez, Kleinschmidt
- WITNESSES:** For — Michael Cargill and Richard Lowe (*Registered, but did not testify*: Dennis Allen; Glen Bartholomew; Brent Connett, Texas Conservative Coalition; Mike Cox; Angel Gonzalez; Susan Morrison

Against — Heather Ross, Gun and Mental Health Action Group; Bridget Wiedenmeyer, Moms Demand Action - Texas Chapters; (*Registered, but did not testify*: David Albert; Grace Chimene; Joanne Richards; John Woods, Texas Gun Sense)

On — Steve Moninger and Sherrie Zgabay, Texas Department of Public Safety (*Registered, but did not testify*: RenEarl Bowie, Texas Department of Public Safety
- BACKGROUND:** Family Code, sec. 231.302 generally requires applicants for a state license, contracts or grants to provide social security numbers for the purposes of identifying individuals to enhance the ability collect child support.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 1349 would amend Family Code, sec. 231.302 to state that the Department of Public Safety (DPS) was not required for the purposes of issuing a concealed handgun license to request an applicant’s social security number, nor would the applicant be obligated to supply it.

The bill would prohibit DPS from requesting or requiring to be disclosed an applicant’s social security number during the initial application or renewal of a concealed handgun license.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2013, and would apply to new or renewal license applications submitted on or after that date.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

HB 1349 would protect the privacy rights of Texans by eliminating the requirement that social security numbers be provided on an application for a new or renewed concealed handgun license. Social security numbers are not required to perform the background checks that DPS conducts when reviewing a concealed handgun license application.

DPS background checks are run using fingerprints, names, birthdays, and other information. While social security numbers provide unique identifiers, they are not essential to background checks. In fact, social security numbers are not required to purchase guns under federal law. With regard to the use of social security numbers by the attorney general and DPS to identify individuals who are delinquent on their child support payments, there are other methods the agencies could use to identify these individuals.

In an age of big government and multinational corporations aggregating data on individuals, Texas must be a leader in opposing this trend and should do all it can to protect the privacy rights of individuals. HB 1349 would protect both state sovereignty and individual rights.

Not requiring the collection of social security numbers for background checks also would protect individuals from online identity thieves, who have shown the ability to hack into government databases and retrieve social security numbers.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

Social security numbers are collected throughout state government's many licensing processes. The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation alone collects social security numbers on 155 licenses in order to help enforce child support orders.

By preventing the collection of social security numbers from concealed handgun applications, HB 1349 effectively would exempt these applicants from the OAG's system to enforce child support orders. Child support delinquency may be a proxy not only for domestic violence, but also lack of individual responsibility. Deadbeat parents should be flagged, not rewarded by creating an exemption that could allow them to obtain a concealed handgun permit.

The idea that providing social security numbers to a government agency somehow invades privacy rights plays into the general belief that our personal liberties are under threat. Individuals in commerce and

interaction with the government routinely reveal social security numbers, credit card information, and other information that remains confidential or is used prudentially. Individual freedom has not been impaired by the exchange of data in the Internet age.

Government Code, sec. 411.192 already protects the information gathered on concealed handgun applications with strict confidentiality requirements, allowing DPS to share the data in limited circumstances with other law enforcement agencies. While other identifying information might be provided under this Government Code, social security numbers already are confidential.