

From the RVC:

By now you have probably all heard that Mensa has a new policy prohibiting weapons at national Mensa events. Our more fervent Second Amendment defenders were quick to leap to a number of incorrect conclusions as soon as this motion showed up on the agenda, but the facts do not support the level of hysteria engendered by this proposal.

First of all, the policy is not the opening salvo of a Mensa campaign against guns. This new policy is actually not about guns at all – it is about insurance. As a result of an incident at the Fort Worth Annual Gathering, where one of our members threatened another with a firearm, apparently committing at least three violations of Texas law in the process, our insurance agent informed us that if we did not ban guns at our events, the carrier would probably cancel our policy. Our agent added that if our coverage were to be terminated for that reason, no other company would be willing to pick it up.

We simply cannot afford to allow this to happen. Aside from the financial risks of doing without liability insurance, we would be unable to hold any more national events, such as the AG, Mind Games, or Colloquia, because the hotels where such things are held require insurance from us. No insurance, no event. It's that simple. We tried to pass the least restrictive ban possible, applying only to national events. The new ban does not apply to your local events or Regional Gatherings. Opponents of the new policy have charged that this is only the beginning – that the Board of Directors intends to expand the ban to local events at some time in the future. I can tell you that the sponsors of this policy, the Risk Management Committee, have no such intent. However, I can't promise that such an expansion won't occur at some future date, because we don't know what the insurance companies might require in the future. For now, however, we are hopeful that they will be satisfied with what we have done so far.

Another misconception is that the new ban prohibits members from bringing weapons to the hotel where the event is held. That is not the intent, although many hotels have such a prohibition, and there's not much we can do about that. Our policy, however, is intended only to prohibit the carrying of weapons in the event rooms themselves. Unfortunately, the motion as actually passed does not make that clear, and I intend to see that an amendment is introduced at the December meeting to clarify this and several other points.

As a Vietnam veteran and the owner of a number of firearms of various kinds, I would never have put my name on this motion if it were part of some kind of anti-gun political statement. Please recognize it for what it is – a financial necessity imposed on us by the insurance industry. If it's any consolation, we investigated over 250 other groups that hold national gatherings similar to ours. Of these, only one – the National Rifle Association – does not have a weapons ban of some kind. In any case, it's a moot point in 2014: our AG is in Massachusetts, where guns are banned everywhere.

Roger Durham