

Kittleman signs Howard gun ban

By Amanda Yeager

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Howard County Executive Allan Kittleman has signed a bill banning firearms in county buildings for everyone but police officers and people who have to carry guns on county business, he announced Tuesday.

The bill, passed by the council on May 4, was co-sponsored by County Council Democrats Calvin Ball, Jen Terrasa and Jon Weinstein. Council Chairwoman Mary Kay Sigaty, a Democrat, joined them to vote in favor of the bill, while Councilman Greg Fox, a Republican, voted against it.

Tuesday, Kittleman said he struggled over whether to sign the bill into law but ultimately was swayed by safety considerations.

"Keeping county employees and residents safe is one of my top priorities," Kittleman said in a statement.

"Currently, there are no prohibitions against bringing weapons into county buildings and there is no question that we need to address this issue."

In March, the county executive had said he wanted to see an exception for concealed carry permit holders added to the bill -- an amendment that would have diluted its power, as open carry of firearms is illegal in Maryland.

Supporters of the ban said it would make county workplaces safer, while Fox and other opponents argued the legislation would be ineffective because county buildings do not have metal detectors installed at their entrances.

If Kittleman had vetoed the bill, he would have likely been overridden by the council's four-to-one Democratic majority.

"After serious consideration, I believe taking necessary steps to prevent individuals from bringing weapons into county office buildings outweighs my concerns over the lack of an exemption for concealed carry permits," he said Tuesday. "While I am a strong supporter of the Second Amendment and while [the bill] is not without flaws, I believe it provides necessary protections to our dedicated employees and citizens."

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