

Howard councilmembers to consider weapons ban for county buildings

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Three members of the Howard County Council are sponsoring a bill that would ban guns and other weapons in county buildings.

The bill, introduced at the council's legislative session Monday night, would prohibit everyone but police officers and a few other professionals from carrying weapons into the county's headquarters in Ellicott City and on other county property. Weapons are already banned in public schools.

Council members Calvin Ball, Jen Terrasa and Jon Weinstein, all Democrats, are co-sponsoring the bill.

In statements released before the bill was introduced, the three said it was intended to make county sites safer.

"I believe that county government has a responsibility to provide a safe environment both for constituents who come to conduct business with the county and for our county employees who come to work in our buildings every day," Ball said in a statement.

Terrasa called the bill, which excludes active and retired police officers, on-duty members of the military and people who are authorized to carry a gun on county business, a "common-sense measure.

"As elected officials, public safety is one of our primary concerns," she said.

While "nothing can make us completely immune to violence," Weinstein said in a statement, "this is a reasonable first step."

A public hearing on the bill, and others introduced this month, is scheduled for March 16.

Council tables Human Rights Commission reorganization

During its voting session Monday night, council members voted 4 to 1 to table a bill seeking to reorganize the county's Human Rights Commission.

The bill, proposed by County Executive Allan Kittleman, suggested shifting the commission's responsibility of hearing discrimination complaints to a hearing examiner with experience in civil rights law. But after commissioners complained that they had not had enough time to weigh in, the bill was stripped of its most significant changes.

Tuesday, the council's four Democrats said giving the bill some more consideration wouldn't hurt.

Councilman Greg Fox voted against tabling the bill. Fox, the council's lone Republican, called the decision "totally unnecessary.

"I think this is nothing more than political nonsense that is holding it up for the sake of holding it up," he said.