

## Our view: This dog won't hunt

### Lawmakers should run from bill that lets workers bring guns to work

If it's spring in Tallahassee, you can expect the National Rifle Association's backers in the Legislature to introduce gun-happy bills that put state residents at needless risk of violence.

This year's no different.

Rep. Dennis Baxley, R-Ocala, again wants to require employers to allow workers to have weapons in locked vehicles on company property, under the so-called "guns in the parking lot" bill.

Now working its way through committee hearings, his bill is named the Individual Personal Private Property Protection Act.

That's heavy on the obfuscating garble, since the measure would actually run roughshod over companies' property rights to placate the gun lobby. That's why it's opposed by pro-business groups such as the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

But all Floridians have a dog in this fight.

Here's why:

Florida companies now can make their own decisions about whether or not to allow employees to keep guns in locked cars.

Under the terms of Baxley's bill, they'd have no power to object to guns in the parking lot, and could face legal action if they did.

But so could homeowners who don't want contractors to have the right to bring guns on their property.

Both groups could be vulnerable to civil lawsuits from victims' families, should an employee use a gun to commit crimes at a place of business, or while working for you.

The bill flies in the face of basic contract laws between Florida employers and workers.

If passed, it would call into question many of the concessions asked of workers, such as to take drug tests, or wear a uniform, a terrible precedent to set for order and efficiency in the workplace.

Leaving weapons at home is one of those concessions employers have the right to ask of employees, as many wisely do, and should remain so.

On a practical level, forcing employers to allow guns in cars on their premises is a threat to public safety.

It creates greater potential for violent crime, from parking lot shoot-outs between angry co-workers to weapons theft.

What's more, the NRA this year pushed lawmakers around the nation to build protections for just about any item locked in employees' cars into bills like Baxley's, hoping to masquerade as a First Amendment issue and gain supporters.

It's a clumsy strategy at best, and a dangerous one at worst, as it would leave employers helpless even to prevent workers from bringing explosives to work, says Mark Wilson, executive vice president of the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

That's why it bewilders us Reps. Mitch Needelman, R-Melbourne, Thad Altman, R-Viera, and Bob Allen, R-Merritt Island, are co-sponsors of this foolish and unnecessary bill, which deserves to die in committee this year, as it did in 2006.

Have they so little shame about kowtowing to the powerful NRA lobby they'll put constituents -- and Space Coast business owners' best interests -- at risk?