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Round two

Another shot at 'bring your gun to work' day

Among the pressing issues under debate in Tallahassee is this gem: Should Goofy be allowed to keep a gun in his car at Disney World?

For the second year in a row, the National Rifle Association and its hospitable allies in the Florida Legislature are trying to win passage of a bill that would severely limit the ability of businesses to regulate firearms on their property.

Many workplaces, including Disney and Publix grocery stores, forbid employees from keeping guns locked in their vehicles in company parking lots.

Rep. Dennis Baxley, R-Ocala, and Sen. Durell Peaden, R-Crestview, revived an effort to block businesses from imposing no-firearms rules on employees or anyone else using their lots.

The measure -- co-sponsored in the House by Rep. Michael Grant, R-Port Charlotte, and Rep. Paige Kreegel, R-Punta Gorda -- also would forbid businesses from asking workers if they have guns in their cars.

Last year, the Legislature suffered a collective panic attack when some of the state's most powerful campaign contributors lined up on opposite sides of this issue.

The NRA backed a measure calling for business owners who banned guns in their lots to be charged with a felony, punishable by up to five years in prison. The Florida Chamber of Commerce and other groups opposed the bill, arguing -- sensibly -- that it infringed on private-property rights and posed a public-safety threat.

The bill died, despite desperate attempts by lawmakers to forge a compromise.

The same groups have squared off over this year's measure, which is only slightly less noxious than the original. Instead of making the offense punishable by a prison term, the bill calls for the Florida attorney general to seek fines against violators.

In an effort to win over opponents, the bill includes language that -- according to supporters -- gives companies immunity from lawsuits stemming from any criminal use of firearms stored in their lots. Like, say, shooting sprees.

Officials of the Chamber of Commerce countered that the liability protections "have questionable

legal authority."

The bigger concerns, as opponents point out, are safety and property rights.

The NRA is free to push its claims that letting employees keep guns in their cars deters workplace shootings and other crime.

But Florida businesses should be free to set their own policies. After all, the property belongs to them, not the employees --and certainly not the NRA.