

Brady Campaign



To Prevent Gun Violence

SENSIBLE GUN LAWS SAVE LIVES

February 4, 2010

Mr. Howard Schultz
Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer
Starbucks Coffee Company
2401 Utah Avenue South
Seattle, Washington 98134

Dear Mr. Schultz:

I am writing to urge you to reverse Starbucks' current policy allowing persons to carry guns, both openly and concealed, into your stores.

Incidents have been occurring, with growing frequency, particularly in California, where gun owners are openly carrying guns in public places like restaurants and coffee shops. Some of these "open carry" meetings have occurred at various Starbucks shops. These gatherings of armed individuals have provoked a strong and adverse reaction from members of the public who are appalled that coffee shops and restaurants would allow guns on their premises. In response, at least two national chains that were targeted by these "open carry" gatherings – Peet's Coffee & Tea and California Pizza Kitchen -- have put the safety of their customers first by announcing policies to bar entry by persons engaged in this activity.

I was dismayed to learn, however, that Starbucks has decided to allow the carrying of guns into its stores. In response to inquiries about its policy, Starbucks' Customer Relations Department has stated that "Starbucks does not have a corporate policy regarding customers and weapons; we defer to federal, state and local laws and regulations regarding this issue." This is an evasion, not a response. The law in California and other states gives businesses the right to bar guns on their premises. Just as your stores may prohibit entry by people who are not wearing shoes, they may prohibit entry by people carrying guns. Contrary to the assertion of your Customer Relations Department, it appears that Starbucks does have a corporate policy regarding customers and weapons – it is to allow customers to carry weapons into its stores.

The fact is that the open display of firearms in public places is inherently threatening and intimidating, and poses risks to those nearby, to law enforcement and to the community. When "open carrying" of guns occurs in retail stores, other customers understandably become alarmed and the police often are called to the scene, creating a volatile and potentially dangerous situation. As a Sheriff's Lieutenant in California put it, "Open carry advocates create a potentially dangerous situation," because when police

respond to a “man with a gun” call, they have no idea what the intentions of the gun carrier may be and “the result could be deadly.”

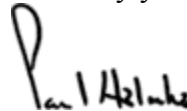
Even where those engaged in “open carry” intend no harm, the risk posed by their conduct is real. There already has been a case in Michigan where a gun was accidentally discharged at an “open carry” gathering. I can’t imagine that your company would want to wait for a tragedy to occur at one of its stores before implementing a “no guns” policy. Such a policy easily could be implemented by simply posting signs at prominent places in your stores.

The “open carry” advocates say they are exercising their rights. On behalf of the Brady Campaign and its chapters across the country, I ask you to consider the rights of the vast majority of your customers to bring their families, including their children, into your stores without being confronted with the threatening presence of “openly-carried” guns.

In 1997, Starbucks suffered the trauma of losing three of its employees to gun violence in one of its Washington, D.C. stores. Particularly in light of that tragedy, I am certain that you appreciate the overriding importance of doing everything in the company’s power to prevent gun violence from again victimizing your customers or employees. Please affirm your company’s commitment to the safety of Starbucks’ customers and employees, and to the well being of the communities you serve, by announcing and enforcing a policy of barring the carrying of guns in your stores.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely yours,



Paul Helmke
President

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