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Church gun bill shot down in La. House

by Ed Anderson by Religion News Service

BATON ROUGE, La. (RNS) A bill that would have allowed people to carry concealed weapons to their places of worship died in the Louisiana House on Thursday (May 6).

Lawmakers voted 45-39 for the bill, eight votes short of what is needed to get a bill through the lower chamber.

Rep. Henry Burns, a Republican, said he will bring the bill back for reconsideration.

"Times have changed," Burns said, referring to shootings at houses of worship in recent years.

He said his bill is designed to give church officials a chance to allow weapons at their worship sites as a way of protecting innocent worshippers from criminals.

Burns said the religious leaders of each church, mosque or synagogue would have to approve the individuals as part of a security plan and inform congregants in the weekly newsletter, bulletin or from the pulpit.

Burns' bill was amended by Rep. Walker Hines, a Democrat from New Orleans, to prohibit the carrying of a firearm at a church on a school campus.

Hines also said he would not want to see Burns' bill apply to "cults and fringe groups."

[Ed Anderson writes of New Orleans' *The Times Picayune*.]

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