Legislators weigh gun, alcohol bills

By Andrea Kelly

PHOENIX — The atmosphere for those who drink in bars could change if lawmakers give bar owners the ability to decide if guns would be allowed inside.

The Senate bill debated on yesterday would change existing law, which prohibits firearms in bars, to say firearms would be prohibited only when the bar owner posted a sign prohibiting firearms. That is to say, unless a sign is posted, guns are ok.

The catch is if the bill passes, anyone carrying a gun would not be allowed to drink while in the bar.

Senators made an effort to reverse the language to say guns would only be allowed in bars that hang a sign saying so, instead of posting when they were not allowed. That effort was knocked down along with an attempt at limiting the bill so it only applied to restaurants serving alcohol, not bars.

Sen. David Allen, R-Scottsdale, said he had received overwhelming opposition to the bill from citizens in his district.

“I think that bars and guns don’t mix,” Allen said as she urged others not to vote for the bill, which she called “bad public policy.”

Sen. Jack Harper, R-Sun City West, disagreed, saying he had not seen one letter to the editor in support she had seen so far was the National Rifle Association, supporter she had seen so far was the National Rifle Association, supporter she had seen so far was the National Rifle Association.

With organizations such as the Arizona Tourism Alliance and the Arizona Restaurant and Hospitality association against the bill, an overwhelming opposition to the bill won.

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When the “Eyes Wide Open: The Human Cost of War” exhibit was unveiled in January 2004 in Chicago, it included 504 boots, each tagged with the name of a U.S. military serviceperson or serviceperson killed in Iraq.

As the number of casualties increased, so has the size of the exhibit, and the boots and civilian shoes now make up a 12,000-square-foot display, Emerson said.

Since there is less data available about the number of Iraqi civilian casualties, the number of civilian shoes stays at 1,500, though the actual death toll has been estimated between 20,000 and 100,000 by some counts, Emerson said.

Patrick O’Brien, one of about 200 volunteers helping to coordinate the exhibit in Tucson, said he hopes the display brings the effects of the war closer to home.

“This (exhibit) is a way to visualize how many people have been lost and realize the human cost of war,” O’Brien said.

While some critics of the exhibit in other cities have called it an anti-war demonstration, O’Brien said he expects the Tucson response to be mostly positive.

“It’s really a time to put aside your political beliefs and honor the people who have made this sacrifice,” he said.

Between 20 and 30 student and faculty volunteers from various UA departments will assist with the setup of the exhibit and read the names of the deceased aloud, Emerson said.

The exhibit will also include a temporary wall listing the known names of deceased Iraqi civilians and an indoor multimedia display about the history and costs of war at the Armory Park Senior Center, 220 S. Fifth Ave., Emerson said.

Emerson said she expects between 2,000 and 3,000 people to visit the free exhibit, which runs Saturday and Sunday and will feature guest speakers, including family members of deceased U.S. soldiers. For a list of speakers and events related to the exhibit, visit www.asuc.org/idw.