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Local News: Saturday, August 24, 2002

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Schools don't ban Kelly for gun infraction

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James Kelly, president of the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, will be allowed into Seattle Public Schools despite his admission that he illegally carried a handgun inside a **school**.

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School district Superintendent Joseph Olchefske said Thursday that Kelly's settlement of criminal charges will not affect the civil-rights leader's welcome in Seattle **school** buildings.

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"From our standpoint, this was a matter for law enforcement. They clearly have responsibility, and we have supported them in that effort," Olchefske said.

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Olchefske said it was "very unfortunate" Kelly had carried a concealed weapon into Rainier Beach High **School** on May 29, but he said Kelly has been "a positive voice for change" in Seattle schools.

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Kelly is co-chairman of the district's public-engagement process on high-**school** graduation requirements.

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The City Attorney's Office last month charged Kelly with the misdemeanor offense of illegally possessing a handgun in a **school**. But in an agreement approved by a Seattle Municipal Court judge this month, prosecutors agreed to drop charges in a year if Kelly performs 80 hours of community service.

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Kelly, who has a concealed-weapons permit, apologized for carrying the gun to a community meeting at Rainier Beach High. Police were called after he put his hand on the gun, which was inside his coat.

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Kelly said he displayed the gun because he was concerned for his safety during a confrontation with opponents of the Urban League's plans to develop the former **Colman School** into apartments, offices and an African-American heritage **museum**.

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