

Starbucks Declares Guns Unwelcome, but Doesn't Ban Them

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CEO Letter Thrusts Coffee Chain Deeper Into Debate Over Gun Owners' Rights to Carry Firearms in Restaurants By JULIE JARGON

Starbucks Corp. {SBUX +1.67%} on Wednesday asked gun owners to stop bringing their weapons into its cafés, thrusting the coffee giant deeper into a national debate over firearms that has proven vexing for retailers and other businesses.

The request, made in an open letter from Chief Executive Howard Schultz, was a response to intensifying pressure on the company for allowing customers to openly carry weapons in states that permit it. Gun control advocates had criticized the company for its laissez-faire stance, while gun rights advocates had lauded its position.

In his written appeal, posted Tuesday night on the Starbucks website, Mr. Schultz said the tussle, exploited by both sides of the gun issue, has “become increasingly uncivil and, in some cases, even threatening.”

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