



Concealed Carry Permits Are Life Savers

by Rep. Cliff Stearns ([more by this author](#))

Posted 01/26/2009 ET

The right to bear arms is more than a Constitutional right: every human being has the natural unalienable right to self-defense. Cicero said 2,000 years ago, "If our lives are endangered by plots or violence or armed robbers or enemies, any and every method of protecting ourselves is morally right."

The U.S. Constitution, the constitutions of 44 states, common law, and the laws of all 50 states recognize the right to use arms in self-defense. Right to carry laws respect the right to self-defense by allowing individuals to carry concealed firearms for their own protection.

So many liberal politicians and self-appointed experts want to keep honest Americans from having access to firearms, even though, since 2003, in states which allow concealed carry, violent crime rates have been lower than anytime since the mid-1970s. The reverse logic of this "knee jerk" reaction is astounding and has led to an outright assault on our basic Constitutional and natural rights. These misguided policies to keep firearms out of the hands of law-abiding citizens literally mean a death sentence for thousands of Americans.

Look at the facts. According to a study by criminologist Gary Kleck of Florida State University, "[R]obbery and assault victims who used a gun to resist were less likely to be attacked or to suffer an injury than those who used any other methods of self-protection or those who did not resist at all." In approximately 2.5 million instances each year, someone uses a firearm, predominantly a handgun, for self defense in this nation.

In research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, in which almost 2,000 felons were interviewed, 34% of felons said they had been "scared off, shot at, wounded or captured by an armed victim" and 40% of these criminals admitted that

they had been deterred from committing a crime out of fear that the potential victim was armed.

Allowing law-abiding people to arm themselves offers more than piece of mind for those individuals -- it pays off for everybody through lower crime rates. Statistics from the FBI's Uniformed Crime Report of 2007 show that states with right-to-carry laws have a 30% lower homicide rate, 46% lower robbery, and 12% lower aggravated assault rate and a 22% lower overall violent crime rate than do states without such laws. That is why more and more states have passed right-to-carry laws over the past decade.

In 1987, my home state of Florida enacted a "shall issue" law that has become the model for other states. Anti-gun groups, politicians and the news media predicted the new law would lead to vigilante justice and "Wild West" shootouts on every corner.

But since adopting a concealed carry law Florida's total violent crime rate has dropped 32% and its homicide rate has dropped 58%. Floridians, except for criminals, are safer due to this law. And Florida is not alone. Texas' violent crime rate has dropped 20% and homicide rate has dropped 31%, since enactment of its 1996 carry law.

Another study makes the moral case for expanding and enhancing right-to-carry laws. A report by John Lott, Jr. and David Mustard of the University of Chicago released in 1996 found "that allowing citizens to carry concealed weapons deters violent crimes and it appears to produce no increase in accidental deaths." Further, the Lott-Mustard study noted, "If those states which did not have right-to-carry concealed gun provisions had adopted them in 1992, approximately 1,570 murders; 4,177 rapes; and over 60,000 aggravate assaults would have been avoided yearly."

Think about it. Nearly 8,000 of our fellow citizens have died between 1992 and 1996 because of the irrational fear that law-abiding Americans would abuse their right to self defense. In fact concealed carry permit holders are more law-abiding than the rest of the public. For example, Florida, which has issued more carry permits than any state has issued 1.36 million permits, but revoked only 165 (0.01%) due to gun crimes by permit-holders.

Laws allowing the concealed carrying of a firearm are on the books in 48 states, in some form. Two-thirds of Americans live in states with right-to-carry laws, their respective state houses and governors recognizing their fundamental right to self-defense. But let me pose a question. Should your natural right to self defense and your Constitutional right to bear arms end when you cross a state line? I think not.

That is why I, along with Representative Rich Boucher (D-Va.) introduced H.R. 197, the National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act. Our legislation proposes a federal law that would entitle any person with a valid state-issued concealed carry permit to carry in any other state, as follows: In a state that issues carry permits, its laws would apply. In states that don't issue carry permits, the Federal law providing a "bright-line" standard would permit carrying in places other than police stations; courthouses; public polling places; meetings of state, county, or municipal governing bodies; schools; passenger areas of airports; etc. The bright-light standard in itself is not a license -- the individual would still have to possess a valid state permit issued by their state of residence. It doesn't make sense to me for Americans to forfeit their safety because they happen to be on vacation or on a business trip. This legislation would greatly enhance the safety of this nation's ever-increasing mobile society.

As Thomas Jefferson wrote, "No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms." Our society is a violent society. However, the innocent deserve access to the tools they need to defend themselves. By passing H.R. 197, we can help reduce the carnage wrought by armed criminals. Let's give those who decide to take the responsibility of possessing a concealed carry permit a fighting chance anywhere in America.

Mr. Stearns, a Republican, represents the 6th District of Florida in the U.S. House of Representatives.

[Advertise](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#)
Copyright © 2009 HUMAN EVENTS. All Rights Reserved.