



State Representative Ron Hood
78th Ohio House District

Sponsor Testimony on House Bill 201
May 16, 2017

Madam Chairman and members of the House Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee, as one of the sponsors of HB 201 and on behalf of gun owners across our state, thank you for bringing this bill forward to the committee for testimony today.

H.B. 201, the Constitutional Carry bill we have before us is, at its core, a simple concept – if you’re legally allowed to possess a firearm, you’re legally allowed to carry that firearm for any lawful purpose with no additional permits, fees, or bureaucratic paperwork required.

HB 201 would make the permit system optional. If an Ohioan wants to obtain a permit for reciprocity purposes, they would continue to be able to do so as the current ‘shall issue’ law would remain unchanged. But they would not be required to.

Currently, it is legal to carry a firearm openly, but when one puts on a coat or jacket, the individual is subject to multiple hurdles, separating Ohioans from their God-given rights as expressed in the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

It is important to note that all of the current disqualifiers on owning firearms at the Federal and State level would remain in effect – Constitutional Carry would not allow criminals any ability to own or carry firearms while committing criminal acts.

The criminal who murdered 9 people in the Charleston, South Carolina church last year passed a background check. The criminal who murdered 12 people in the Aurora, Colorado movie theater in 2012 passed a background check. The criminal who murdered 13 people in the Naval Yard shooting in 2013 passed a background check.

Both of the Ft. Hood shootings, the Virginia Tech shooting, the Tucson shooting that injured former Congresswoman Giffords – all of the murderers in these cases bought their guns legally and passed a background check.

Clearly, the regulations and restrictions that are in place currently are not stopping violent crime and only serve as barriers for law abiding citizens who are trying to possess and carry firearms for self-defense. In fact, a 2015 study from the Crime Prevention Research Center's Annual Report would seem to indicate that states with Constitutional Carry laws have lower crime rates than states with permit systems – simply because criminals know there's an even greater chance that a would-be victim may be armed.

Constitutional Carry laws are being enacted in more and more states. Just this year, North Dakota and Vermont enacted it into law. Last year Missouri, Idaho, Mississippi, Maine and our neighbors in West Virginia joined states like Arkansas, Vermont, Wyoming, Arizona, and Alaska in making carry permits optional.

In the first sixteen years of Arizona's concealed carry permitting program, Arizona issued an average of about 9,500 permits per year. This changed on July 10, 2010 when Constitutional Carry took effect, making the permit optional in Arizona.

Since Constitutional Carry took effect in 2010, Arizona has issued about 15,500 permits per year. More law-abiding gun owners in Arizona (63% more) are seeking training and obtaining a permit *after* the permit became optional rather than when it was government-mandated.

This legislation also passed the legislature in South Dakota this year, and is currently introduced and under consideration in states like Idaho, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, Louisiana, Virginia, Michigan, and Indiana.

In addition to making the current permit system optional, H.B. 201 would remove Ohio's "duty to notify" statute that currently requires citizens to notify officers upon contact that they are carrying a firearm.

Current law says that an individual who is openly carrying a firearm without a permit does not have to notify a law enforcement officer when they come into contact with one another during a traffic stop. However, a person openly carrying a firearm in the same circumstance is mandated to notify an officer for simply possessing a concealed weapon license and could be charged with a crime for failing to do so. Ohio has had several instances in which otherwise law-abiding citizens are being charged for not notifying an officer quickly enough that they were exercising their Second Amendment rights.

Put simply, the duty to notify creates needless friction. For example, if an off-duty paramedic were to respond to the scene of an accident to render first aid, the act of notifying every responding officer that you are carrying a firearm not only wastes precious time, but it could alarm an arriving officer and cause even more delays while the situation is sorted out by the officers.

A criminal intending to commit a crime of violence will ignore the duty to notify anyway.

Law-abiding citizens exercising their Second Amendment rights are some of the finest citizens in the state of Ohio. They respect the rule of law and they respect our excellent law-enforcement community.

It's my belief that it is time for Ohio to take what is clearly the next step in defending the Second Amendment at the state level by passing HB 201.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.