

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

11250 WAPLES MILL ROAD

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030



NRA

February 8, 2022

House Government Oversight Committee

1 Capitol Square

Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Wilkin and Members of the House Government and Oversight Committee:

I am here today to speak about Senate Bill 215 and the National Rifle Association's (NRA) support of this important piece of legislation. On behalf of our members in Ohio, I want to thank Senator Johnson for his leadership and support of this effort. Our organization and membership are in strong support of this legislation.

My goal today is to provide you with some of the facts around constitutional carry. I, also, hope to provide you with some comparative analysis and data from other states that have opted for this policy. Additionally, I hope to dispel many of the myths and misinformation that is circulating about this issue.

I want to go through a few facts around this policy:

First: This is not a new or uncommon policy. Nearly two thirds of US states (31) allow constitutional open carry and twenty-one allow concealed constitutional carry. In most of the country law-abiding citizens can carry a firearm for self-protection without government permission and having to pay a fee. Ohio's current system is setup as a privilege, not a right. Constitutional carry simply allows a person who is otherwise legally able to possess and carry a firearm to do so in a manner of their choosing, often in a discrete, concealable fashion. Again, this is not a new or uncommon policy.

Secondly: Constitutional carry will not allow prohibited persons to carry or buy guns. There are a number of misconceptions about constitutional carry, some accidental and some purposely placed. Constitutional carry does not change prohibited person laws or any law governing the misuse of a firearm to include illegal brandishing, discharge, or threatening, among others. It does not affect prohibited places where a firearm cannot be carried, or when force may be used in defense of self or others.

It does not change who can legally purchase a firearm. Felons, violent criminals, drug users, and those adjudicated mentally defective still cannot go into a store and

purchase a firearm.

Constitutional carry simply gives law abiding people better options for self-defense. Law abiding citizens are the only individuals currently obtaining licenses to carry a concealed firearm. Allowing these individuals to carry concealed, without a license, will not change the fact that they are law abiding.

This policy is for the law abiding citizen who should not have to jump through governmental hoops to exercise a natural, constitutional right. Constitutional carry simply puts the law-abiding on equal footing.

Third: States enacting constitutional carry legislation do not devolve into the Wild West. Opponents in every state claim that if constitutional carry is enacted that it is going to be the end of days and that lawlessness and killing will escalate to epic proportions. Fortunately I get to be the bearer of good news. These claims are simply not true.

One of the most common myths that we hear is that removing the requirement of a permit is going to endanger law enforcement. Similar arguments were made during the passage of concealed carry, which is now in all 50 states, and simply is not true.

To examine the impact of Constitutional Carry we used data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual "Crime in the United States Report," our analysis focuses on the number of murders, including both those committed with a firearm and those committed with a handgun, in these states.

For this analysis we selected states that have enacted a relevant law and for which sufficient public data is available for both the pre- and post-law periods. The states that meet these requirements: Alaska, Arizona, Wyoming, Kansas, Maine, Idaho, West Virginia, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, and North Dakota.

Vermont has always had Constitutional Carry. Other states enacted Constitutional Carry laws too recently to allow a meaningful comparison of murder statistics before and after the law took effect.

Based on our analysis, it is clear that none of the states with sufficient available data experienced an increase in the number of murders, including handgun murders, after enacting Constitutional Carry.

Fourth: People still apply for and pay for permits. The evidence from states who have enacted this policy have actually seen an increase over time in their permits. Arizona, for example, saw a more than 40% increase in issued permits in the years following adoption of constitutional carry.

The current Ohio permitting system will remain in place for those still wanting to obtain a permit for reciprocity with other states.

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Training programs will still be as readily available as they are today for those who wish to obtain instruction.

Fifth: Criminals already carry concealed firearms without regard for the law. This legislation is not for them. It simply puts law-abiding Ohioans on equal footing.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, the second amendment is clear and concise and guarantees the freedom and right to bear arms. It is time that we get back to trusting the citizens of this state with the rights guaranteed to them through the second amendment. I strongly urge passage of Senate Bill 215.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Weber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

John Weber
State Director
NRA-ILA