

**Institute for Legislative Action**

11250 WAPLES MILL ROAD

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA 22030



**NRA**

February 10, 2025

Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee,

My name is John Weber and I represent the National Rifle Association of America. I appreciate the opportunity to address you on this issue, which is important to NRA members and gun owners throughout Maryland. The NRA fully supports HB 353.

Currently, 29 states allow law-abiding individuals to carry a concealed handgun without a government-issued permit. Vermont has never required a permit to carry dating back to 1791.

Similarly, many states currently allow the open carry of a handgun without a government permit. In most of the country law-abiding citizens can carry a firearm for self-protection without government permission or having to pay a fee. Maryland is in the minority.

This past year we have also seen similar measures introduced in numerous other states and there is no doubt we'll see a dozen or more Constitutional carry bills introduced next year around the country. This is not a new or uncommon policy.

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.

There are a number of misconceptions about Constitutional carry. Let me be clear, 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. Private property owners will still maintain discretion over their own property, including whether and on what terms to allow firearms.

It does not change who can legally purchase a firearm. Federal disqualifiers for firearm possession will continue to apply and include:

- Felony Conviction
- Conviction of a misdemeanor crime of domestic abuse
- Having been adjudicated mentally incompetent
- Dishonorable discharge from the U.S. Military
- An unlawful user of alcohol, controlled substances or other drugs
- Persons currently subject to a protective order

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. Criminals, on the other hand, are already carrying concealed firearms without licenses.

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This policy is for the law abiding 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.

Constitutional Carry gives criminals a reason to fear that any potential victim could be armed and disincentivizes criminal conduct.

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. The National Rifle Association used data from the FBI's annual "Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted" report to analyze the impact of Constitutional Carry laws on the number of law enforcement personnel feloniously killed with a handgun.

From these states, we selected those with sufficient public data available for the periods before and after the law went into effect. These states are Alaska, Arizona, and Wyoming. Vermont has always had Constitutional Carry and Montana's law is not statewide. Other states enacted Constitutional Carry laws too recently to allow an analysis of the impact on felonious killings of law enforcement personnel. Based on our analysis, none of the three states with sufficient available data have experienced an increase in the number of felonious killings of law enforcement personnel committed with a handgun after Constitutional Carry took effect.

Alaska enacted Constitutional Carry in 2003. Between 1998 and 2015, ten members of the law enforcement community have been lost to felonious killings; three were killed with a handgun. None occurred in the years after Constitutional Carry became law.

Arizona enacted Constitutional Carry in 2010. Between 1998 and 2015 thirty law enforcement officers were feloniously killed. Twenty were killed with a handgun. The average number of law enforcement officers feloniously killed by a handgun is the same (one) in the five-year period before Constitutional Carry as in the five years following.

Wyoming enacted Constitutional Carry for residents in 2011. Since 1998, there have been zero felonious killings of law enforcement personnel.

These past few years have reminded gun owners the Second Amendment is their best means of keeping themselves and their loved ones safe. They have also been reminded that there are very powerful individuals and bodies that would like to abolish that right and now, more than ever, they must fight to protect it.

I'd like to reiterate that carrying without a permit is common in many places throughout the United States.

Constitutional carry does not allow prohibited persons, felons, those subject to protection orders or the mentally ill the right to carry.

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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States utilizing Constitutional carry policies do not devolve into the Wild West. There is no evidence of increased crime and no increased danger to police. These laws don't change criminals behavior.

Constitutional carry simply gives law-abiding citizens additional options for self-protection. I respectfully ask that you support this bill.

In closing, I'd like to share with you some comments from Sheriff Joe Rodriguez of Nez Perce County in Idaho in a recent interview published in a local paper about constitutional carry. He anticipated that the number of residents applying for concealed carry permits would fall off, but they didn't. When asked about crime he said it hasn't affected crime rates. In quotes he said "nothing has changed."

If and when Maryland ends the requirement of residents needing a permit to carry a handgun in public, don't expect any negative changes. The evidence just isn't there.

Thank you,

NRA-ILA State Director