



FACT SHEET

# National Concealed-Carry Reciprocity

January 2015

**Bottom line:** National concealed-carry reciprocity is a dangerous proposal that will put citizens and law enforcement at risk. Concealed-carry reciprocity would lower the required standards for issuing permits to the lowest common denominator, undermine the authority of individual states in determining the most appropriate way to approach gun carrying for their population, and override the will of states to enact high standards regarding who can carry concealed, loaded guns in public.

**Who is eligible to carry a concealed firearm?** Each state has the discretion to decide whether to allow individuals to carry concealed, loaded weapons in public, and all 50 states allow certain residents to carry concealed guns. While four states—Alaska, Arizona, Vermont, and Wyoming—do not require a permit to carry a concealed gun, the remaining 46 states have enacted permitting laws that establish guidelines for who is eligible to carry guns. Some states will issue a permit to almost anyone, including those with a criminal record, while other states impose strict eligibility and training requirements. States with the strongest laws give discretion to local law enforcement to consider an applicant's entire criminal history on a case-by-case basis before issuing a permit.

*Many states have weak standards for issuing concealed-carry permits:*

- At least 10 states will issue permits to people convicted of violent misdemeanor crimes.<sup>1</sup>
- At least 19 states will allow people with a demonstrated history of drug or alcohol abuse to carry guns.<sup>2</sup>
- At least 10 states will issue a permit without first requiring some form of firearms safety training.<sup>3</sup>

**If concealed-carry reciprocity legislation were enacted,** all states would be mandated to allow these criminals and dangerous individuals to carry concealed, loaded guns throughout the community—regardless of whether they would be ineligible to do so under the laws of that state.

*Weak laws in a number of states have allowed dangerous people to carry concealed guns, often with tragic results*

- According to a review of media reports conducted by the Violence Policy Center, since 2007, at least 679 people have been shot and killed by someone legally permitted to carry a concealed gun.<sup>4</sup>

## The George Zimmerman example

George Zimmerman has an extensive history of violence and run-ins with police—both before and after he fatally shot unarmed teenager Trayvon Martin in 2012—that includes assaulting a police officer, four incidents involving domestic violence, and a road rage incident that involved threatening the other driver.<sup>10</sup> Yet, despite this history, Zimmerman is still eligible to carry concealed, loaded guns under Florida's weak concealed-carry permitting laws. If national concealed-carry reciprocity becomes law, every state will be mandated to allow individuals like Zimmerman to carry guns within their borders.

- In 2002, a study of concealed-carry permit holders in Texas found that people with concealed-carry permits were arrested for crimes involving weapons at a rate 81 percent higher than that of the state's general adult population.<sup>5</sup>

*Poor administration of state permitting systems exacerbates the risk posed by national concealed-carry reciprocity legislation*

- A 2007 investigation of the Florida concealed-carry permit system found that the state had issued permits to more than 1,400 felons, 216 people with outstanding warrants, and 128 people with active domestic violence restraining orders.<sup>6</sup>
- An investigation by *The New York Times* found that, between 2007 and 2011, at least 2,400 concealed-carry permit licensees in North Carolina were convicted of misdemeanor crimes or felonies. Of those convicted of felonies—a conviction that bars gun possession—state authorities failed to nullify permits for at least half of them.<sup>7</sup>

*Law enforcement organizations overwhelmingly oppose concealed-carry reciprocity*

“National concealed carry reciprocity would severely undermine state concealed carry licensing systems ... national concealed carry reciprocity would create potentially life-threatening situations for law enforcement officers.”<sup>8</sup>

— Jim Johnson, Baltimore County, Maryland police chief and chair of the National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence

“Ambiguity to the legality of firearm possession could lead to confusion among police officers that could result in catastrophic incidences. Congress should be working to make the job of a police officer more safe, not less.”<sup>9</sup>

— Hubert Williams, president of the Police Foundation

For more information, visit <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/guns-crime/view/>.

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## Endnotes

1 CAP analysis of state laws.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Violence Policy Center, “Total People Killed by Concealed Carry Killers May 2007 to the Present” (2015), available at [http://www.vpc.org/fact\\_sht/ccwtotalkilled.pdf](http://www.vpc.org/fact_sht/ccwtotalkilled.pdf).

5 Legal Community Against Violence, “America Caught in the Crossfire: How Concealed Carry Laws Threaten Public Safety” (2012), available at [http://smartgunlaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LCAV\\_CCW.pdf](http://smartgunlaws.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/LCAV_CCW.pdf).

6 Megan O’Matz and John Maines, “License to Carry: Florida’s Flawed Concealed Weapon Law,” *Sun Sentinel*, January 28, 2007, available at [http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2007-01-28/news/0701270316\\_1\\_gun-licensing-system](http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/2007-01-28/news/0701270316_1_gun-licensing-system).

7 Michael Luo, “Guns in Public, and Out of Sight,” *The New York Times*, December 26, 2011, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/27/us/more-concealed-guns-and-some-are-in-the-wrong-hands.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/27/us/more-concealed-guns-and-some-are-in-the-wrong-hands.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

8 Letter from Jim Johnson, police chief of Baltimore County, Maryland, to members of Congress, April 15, 2013, available at <http://lepartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/LEPartnership-4-15-National-Concealed-Carry-Letter.pdf>.

9 Letter from Hubert Williams, president of the Police Foundation, to Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX), July 6, 2011, available at <http://cloudfront.mediamattersaction.org/static/pdfs/police-foundation-letter.pdf>.

10 Greg Botelho and Carma Hassan, “George Zimmerman arrested on suspected domestic violence,” CNN, January 13, 2015, available at <http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/10/us/george-zimmerman-arrested/index.html>; NBC News, “Zimmerman accused of domestic violence, fighting with a police officer,” March 27, 2012, available at [http://usnews.nbcnews.com/\\_news/2012/03/27/10894561-zimmerman-accused-of-domestic-violence-fighting-with-a-police-officer?lite](http://usnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/03/27/10894561-zimmerman-accused-of-domestic-violence-fighting-with-a-police-officer?lite); CBS4 Miami, “Police: George Zimmerman named in Florida road rage incident,” September 12, 2014, available at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/george-zimmerman-named-in-florida-road-rage-incident/>; Richard Luscombe, “George Zimmerman domestic violence charges dropped,” *The Guardian*, December 11, 2013, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/12/george-zimmerman-domestic-violence-charges-dropped>.

**National law enforcement organizations that oppose concealed-carry reciprocity:**

- National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence
- Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc.
- Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association
- International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators
- International Association of Chiefs of Police
- Major Cities Chiefs Association
- National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives
- National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives
- Police Executive Research Forum
- Police Foundation