

A Good Idea - Rep. Glenn Grothman, 58th Assembly District

When I originally ran for this office, an issue I was asked to take a stand on was that of the right to carry a concealed gun. To someone who has spent their life in Wisconsin where concealed carrying of guns has always been illegal, the idea of allowing concealed carrying of weapons initially appeared rash. Like many people, I had visions of the Old West with arguments over car accidents or in bars being settled with guns. A little bit of research on the experience of forty-five other states showed how wrong I was.

In the past fifteen years in this country, state after state has allowed licensed people to carry a concealed weapon. This revolution began in Florida where Miami was once known as the murder capital of the country. John Lott, a professor at the University of Chicago, studied the Florida situation and did follow-up studies on the states that adopted concealed carry laws. Lott, like many professors, expected to find significant increases in crime. Instead, he found a dramatic success story. Miami's murder rate dropped significantly as did Florida's overall murder rate. In the sixteen years after Florida adopted its law, its murder rate dropped significantly more than the national rate. Miami is no longer the murder capital of the United States. In addition, Florida's license owners were less likely to commit a violent crime than off-duty Florida police officers.

This makes sense. The vast majority of citizens are law abiding. Criminals rob people if they feel there is not a risk. When a small percentage of responsible citizens are armed, criminals are much less likely to commit random crime. Unlike on television, people who own guns do not use them frivolously. Of all the people you know who own guns, how many have reached for them in anger? When Wisconsin began to allow handguns for hunting a few years ago, there were predictions of the Wild West but there have been no incidents. An article in Newsweek magazine claims concealed carry owners are much less likely than law enforcement to use their weapons in error.

In Florida, as in some other states, some members of law enforcement initially opposed the law, but appreciated it once it went into effect. In fact, as it reduces crime rates, it also reduces the number of police shot by criminals.

Right now Wisconsin is one of only fourteen states to not have "shall issue" concealed carry laws. Nine other states have a more limited form of concealed carry. Recently both Minnesota and Missouri adopted this law.

The Wisconsin law is limited to people age 21, who are not a felon or subject to a civil mental commitment. They may not be guilty of violent misdemeanors or be drug or alcohol dependent. They cannot carry in taverns and must take a rigorous firearms safety course.

In the past thirty years, murders in the city of Milwaukee have more than doubled, while the population has fallen by seventeen percent. The number of police officers is almost identical to what it was thirty years ago. In the last sixteen years, our prison population has gone from under 6,000 to 22,000. It's time to try something else. I am a co-sponsor of Wisconsin's concealed carry bill.

Please let me know what you think on this issue. Contact me here in Madison---please call 1-888-534-0058.

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