



NC lagging on gun rights. What direction will it go?

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June 14, 2022

Few states offer a better microcosm of the U.S. than North Carolina. It's a perpetual battleground state where neither side can afford to cede any ground. This is increasingly true on the issue of firearms, where little progress is made — whether it be increased gun control or stronger Second Amendment protections. At best, North Carolina is stuck in the muddled middle nationally — where some laws reflect conservative red states and others much bluer areas of the country.

Given the horrific school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, last month, the 2022 mid-term elections may further highlight the national divide on gun laws. Conservative states could expand already strong Second Amendment protections to help blunt mass shooters while blue states beef up trendy gun control measures. Raising the age limits on firearm purchases, expanding red-flag laws, or even banning certain semi-automatic firearms outright are just starting points for those who favor more gun control.

Here in North Carolina, the archaic and now redundant pistol permit system is the most glaring example of intrusive and unnecessary regulation. It's one of the main reasons that the Cato Institute ranked North Carolina 35th nationally on gun rights. All firearm purchases from a licensed dealer undergo federal background system checks, but North Carolina's holdover pistol permit laws add a cumbersome layer to the process. If one hasn't taken their concealed carry class, they must file for a special pistol permit through the sheriff's office, which includes paying \$5.00, filling out paperwork, dropping off a mental health release form, and waiting for the paperwork to be processed.

In fact – and especially given that Gov. Roy Cooper embraces strict gun control laws — the state is conceivably one election away from going the direction of California or New York.

It could get much worse for North Carolinians with bills like the 2019 “Gun Violence Protection Act.” In more recent years, some of the measures have been broken into separate bills and introduced in the General Assembly.

The proposed laws require special permits for long guns, mandate liability insurance for gun owners, and allow the destruction of seized guns by law enforcement. Just as concerning, it utilizes the “California Roster of Certified Handguns,” which is an aggressive gun ban because it excludes many firearms from purchase altogether.

As Americans know well, rights once taken are very rarely given back. Things could get much worse if North Carolinians do not jealously guard their already-diminished Second Amendment rights. New York, which has banned standard capacity magazines and neutered modern rifles, has passed a law requiring special licensing for some of the most popular firearms. Residents must be at least 21 and pass a safety course to apply for a permit.

North Carolinians and Americans alike should take note, the Buffalo shooting took place in New York under some of the strictest gun laws in the country. No red-flag law, age limit, special permit, magazine ban, or background check (which he passed) stopped that shooter. California, the utopia for gun control, leads the country in mass shootings. How could this be? Well, as the tale as old as time goes, gun laws only disarm the law-abiding. That is why these tragedies occur regardless of strict federal or state gun laws.

Those genuinely seeking to stop mass shootings, as opposed to those seeking to disarm the citizenry and increase their power, should focus on solutions that will *work* instead of those which have been proven not to help. Schools, movie theaters, and churches become easy targets for the demented people who commit these mass killings because no one is armed. Somehow shooting ranges and other areas where law-abiding citizens possess firearms are much less susceptible to mass shooters. When criminals attack people who are armed, the results turn out differently. See this, this, this, all of these, and many more. How many more active shooters could be stopped if we simply allowed more good guys to be armed like they are outside of the “gun-free zones?” It’s time to find out because clearly keeping people helpless isn’t working.

North Carolina has the chance to be an example for the rest of the country. By allowing more law-abiding citizens to be armed as they are in 25 other states, allowing teachers (who want it) the opportunity to fight back, and investing in training and armed resource officers, North Carolina can be a state that doesn’t merely embody the status quo but makes overdue reforms for not only rights — but public safety.

North Carolina can lead on gun rights while simultaneously pushing for policies that punish criminals and not law-abiding citizens. Going in the other direction only means empowering those with no intention of following the law, particularly if they are confident that the citizenry is unarmed.