



OPINION: Majority of states will have constitutional carry before North Carolina

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The likelihood of over half of states securing constitutional carry before North Carolina is all but inevitable now. Alabama and Ohio passed constitutional carry this month, and Georgia, Indiana, and Nebraska are close. Gov. Mike DeWine's signature in Ohio makes it the 23rd state. Constitutional carry, based on Vermont's state constitution, simply means that if one can legally own a firearm, they should be able to carry that firearm concealed or not. (North Carolina allows for open carry). Simply put, free citizens shouldn't be required to pay fees and receive a permission slip for an inherent right enshrined in the Bill of Rights.

For North Carolinians, these headlines from other states make the slide down the rankings on respecting Second Amendment rights all the more evident. The Cato Institute recently placed North Carolina in the bottom 16 nationally, mainly because of the embarrassing Jim Crow-era pistol permit process. Requiring an arduous pistol purchase permit process no longer exists in any other Southeastern state. North Carolinians should continually ask lawmakers why they are less trustworthy and responsible than the residents in neighboring states?

In the 1990s, once a leader on gun rights, the state is now playing catch up.

“That North Carolina seems unable to pass legislation for permitless or ‘constitutional’ concealed carry even as it advances elsewhere is ironic given that ours was one of the first to consider what was then ‘Vermont Carry’ as early as 1997,” said Grass Roots North Carolina President Paul Valone.

Valone's organization played a pivotal role in helping to pass concealed carry in 1995, and other firearm protections, including Castle Doctrine and stand your ground (2011), striking down emergency gun bans (2012), and expansions to concealed carry (2011, 2013, 2015).

The N.C. House passed constitutional carry legislation in 2017, but it then stalled in the Senate. Even during General Assembly Republican supermajorities, and under former GOP Gov. Pat McCrory, lawmakers have repeatedly struck out on this issue in North Carolina. After the November elections, new blood in Raleigh and potential GOP supermajorities could finally propel the issue forward. Valone likes to remind lawmakers that if a “red wave” emerges, Republican leadership would be wise to remember the decades-long loyalty from Second Amendment activists. Catherine Whiteford, a Republican candidate for N.C. House District 73,

is one new potential lawmaker who says she will introduce constitutional carry on her first day in office.

North Carolina is fast becoming an island for sub-par gun rights in its region. In the meantime, “a constitutional carry wave is sweeping the country,” as Southeast Regional Director of Gun Owners of America Jordan Stein says. “North Carolina’s neighbors, Tennessee and soon-to-be Georgia have abolished the need to carry permits,” added Stein. “However, the Tar Heel state lags behind, still clinging to its antiquated pistol purchase and carry permits.” Stein says the state is overdue in not only passing constitutional carry but nixing the Jim Crow-era pistol permit system.

The crux of the issue remains whether one believes the right to bear arms is a permission granted by government or whether it reflects a God-given natural right understood in our founding documents. North Carolina can choose to remain on the sidelines, but that strategy gets much riskier as partisan politics increasingly determine our freedoms in America.