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Federal Court Smacks Down D.C. Ban On Carrying Guns

A federal appeals court just ruled that residents of the nation's capitol may carry their guns in public, delivering a major victory for a gay-friendly shooting club.

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July 26, 2017

In a 2-1 ruling, the District of Columbia Appeals Court ruled Tuesday that Washington DC's restrictions on carrying guns are unconstitutional.

The decision marks a major victory for Pink Pistols, a gay-friendly shooting club which has fought on the forefront of restoring gun rights for citizens in Washington DC.

For decades, the city banned residents from keeping a functional gun in their homes. City laws required gun owners to either disassemble their guns or put a trigger lock on them when storing them in their homes, which made them non-functional and completely useless if someone were to use their firearm in self-defense.

In 2008, the Supreme Court ruled these restrictions were unconstitutional. Tom Palmer, a senior fellow at the CATO institute and a plaintiff in the aforementioned case (*Heller vs. D.C.*), sued the city in 2014 over its ban on carrying guns, and won.

Palmer's decision to become a gun-rights activist began one night in 1982, when carrying a gun saved his life from a mob threatening to kill him. VICE reports:

Tom Palmer, a gay libertarian, was walking to dinner with a co-worker in 1982 when he was told by a group of passing homophobes that he would be killed and nobody would ever find his body. Walking slowly away, and then running, Palmer was pursued by the gang for about a hundred feet until he turned to face them with the handgun his mother had given him. His aggressors retreated when they saw the gun, and Palmer was safe—the gun may very well have saved his life.

Since 2014, the city council has tried to limit the number of carry permits by saying that residents need a “good reason to fear injury” and detail specific circumstances that comprise a good reason.

Matthew Grace and the Pink Pistols, a gay-friendly shooting club, has been fighting these restrictions in court for three years.

The Pink Pistols aims to ensure members of the LGBTQ community can protect themselves if they are ever in a situation like Palmer's scary, near-death experience.

"We teach queers to shoot. Then we teach others that we have done so," their website states.

Armed queers don't get bashed. We change the public perception of the sexual minorities, such that those who have in the past perceived them as safe targets for violence and hateful acts — beatings, assaults, rapes, murders — will realize that now, a segment of the sexual minority population is now armed and effective with those arms. Those arms are also concealed, so they do not know which ones are safe to attack, and which are not...which they can harm as they have in the past, and which may draw a weapon and fight back.

This week, a federal appeals court ruled in their favor.

The "good reason" law "impinges on a 'core' Second Amendment right," thus rendering it unconstitutional, the court said in its decision.