

[Be a Good Victim](#) by David Rittgers

Marin County, California:

In August, a man shot two people to death on a bridge near San Francisco. At the moment of the killings, two on-duty Marin County sheriff's deputies were within 100 yards of the shooter. One was close enough to see the muzzle blast of the shotgun. The police officers, however, did not move against the culprit. One, stuck in traffic, called in a description of the killer's vehicle as he fled. The other positioned her car to prevent traffic from entering the crime scene.

These two law-enforcement officers did what police officers tell the public to do: Don't intervene. Get a description of the offender. Call the police. Be a good witness.

Much debate ensued about whether the officers' behavior was appropriate, but the real tragedy is that the victims of this rampage did not have the legal opportunity to arm themselves. To them, the message was clear: Be a good victim.

"May Issue" can be better than "No Issue", but it's a compromise that can work against the God-given and Constitutionally-guaranteed right to bear arms. Sheriff Robert Doyle in Marin County requires applicants to demonstrate "extreme need" before he'll okay a permit. That's like forcing drivers to demonstrate that they're going to be in a traffic accident before the government allows them to put on their seat belts.

Rittgers writes about the District of Columbia and concealed carry, adding:

Tom Palmer (disclosure: Tom is my colleague at the Cato Institute), once used a handgun to deter a mob of violent aggressors who were yelling death threats at him. Tom's right, and the right of any other citizen, to arm himself should not be subject to approval by a civil servant who will not be present to protect them.

Criticism leveled at the Marin sheriffs for the August incident may not be warranted. Though close, they may not really have been able to do anything.

Which is *exactly* the point.

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