

D.C. doesn't need more guns on the streets

By Andy Feeney
Washington







Although I detest his politics, I feel a grudging sympathy for Tom G. Palmer, the gay Cato Institute staffer who last year joined the successful lawsuit to overturn the District's ban on handgun ownership [["D.C. handgun ban plaintiff takes a new shot,"](#) Metro, Feb. 21].

According to the story on Mr. Palmer's new effort to legalize the carrying of handguns inside city limits, his possession of a handgun may have saved his life on one occasion when two apparent homophobes seemed about to assault Mr. Palmer and a straight companion. Simply by displaying his handgun to the would-be gay-bashers, Mr. Palmer reportedly forced his attackers to back down. It's understandable that he would like to be able to do this again.

Yet I wonder what Mr. Palmer will do if his new lawsuit succeeds, and it gives violent gay-bashers, too, the right to legally carry loaded handguns in the streets. The next time Mr. Palmer is walking with a male companion down a dark street in a dodgy neighborhood, will his attackers simply shoot both of them on sight, rather than attempting the more cumbersome route of assaulting them with fists or feet?

I also fear the effect on my Mount Pleasant neighborhood, where we already experience teenage gang members firing at one another with illegal handguns. The notion that convenience-store owners confronted by armed robbers might now also be armed, and firing back, isn't reassuring to those of us who could get caught in the crossfire.

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