

Editorial

## Packing Heat Everywhere

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Some bad ideas refuse to die. Include in that category an extreme proposal percolating in the House to strip states of their authority to decide who may carry a concealed loaded firearm. This gift to the gun lobby, the subject of a hearing last week by a House Judiciary subcommittee, is nearly identical to a provision the Senate defeated by a narrow margin two years ago.

Every state but Illinois makes some allowance for concealed weapons. The eligibility rules vary widely and each state decides whether to honor another state's permits. For example, 38 states prohibit people convicted of certain violent crimes like assault or sex crimes from carrying concealed guns. At least 36 states set a minimum age of 21; 35 states require gun safety training.

The proposed National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act of 2011 would shred those standards and the public safety judgments behind them, creating a locked-and-loaded race to the bottom in which states with strict requirements, like New York, would be forced to allow people with permits from states with lax screening to carry hidden loaded guns.

This trashing of state and local prerogatives is not only unwise but unnecessary. In its wrongheaded 2008 decision recognizing an individual's Second Amendment right to keep guns in the home for self-defense, the Supreme Court still left room for reasonable gun limits, including restrictions on toting concealed weapons. Since then, several federal courts have upheld state concealed-carry permitting rules, including a decision this month by a federal district judge that upheld New York's concealed-carry law.

Philadelphia's police commissioner, Charles Ramsey, said at the House panel hearing that the measure would interfere with law enforcement and could put officers at greater risk in making traffic stops. He pointed to the bill's failure to establish a national database or other enforcement mechanism to allow officers to verify the validity of an unfamiliar out-of-state concealed-carry permit shown by a person with a loaded gun.

Others contend that the bill's nationalization of lenient concealed-carry rules would increase gun violence and hinder efforts to combat illegal gun trafficking.

On Capitol Hill, unfortunately, such concerns matter less than election-year politics and the demands of the National Rifle Association. The bill, introduced by Representatives Cliff Stearns, a Florida Republican, and Heath Shuler, a North Carolina Democrat, already has more than 240 co-sponsors, all but guaranteeing House passage.

Two years ago, Senators Charles Schumer of New York and Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey, both Democrats, led the successful fight to defeat it in the Senate. They and others in the Senate have to stand up again for gun sanity. For his part, President Obama should be threatening to veto this outrageous measure.