

House takes aim at concealed-carry laws

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FORTY-EIGHT STATES — 49 in November, when Wisconsin joins the pack — allow their residents to carry concealed weapons. Illinois remains the only holdout.

Until now, states have been able to set their own rules for concealed-carry permits. New York, for instance, has fairly stringent standards that ban licenses to those convicted of certain misdemeanors, require individuals to demonstrate a legitimate need and mandate firearms training. Utah's is laxer, essentially issuing licenses to residents and nonresidents alike.

These differences would be obliterated by the [National Right-to-Carry Reciprocity Act](#), which was taken up by a House panel last week. The act would force states that allow concealed-carry to permit out-of-town visitors to tote hidden handguns if they have obtained a license elsewhere — regardless of the issuing state's standards. Advocates say that the law will allow law-abiding citizens to defend themselves wherever they are and to ensure that their right to travel — with gun handy — is not impeded by an obstinate state. This approach is bad policy and unnecessary law.

Many states already have agreements to recognize concealed-carry licenses from other jurisdictions. Virginia, for example, honors licenses from 27 other states that have similarly robust standards; Maryland, which strictly regulates concealed-carry, and the District, which essentially prohibits it, do not recognize out-of-state licenses. These are legitimate choices that would be overridden by a federal legislature that too easily bends to the will of the gun lobby. Nevada, a strong gun-rights state, [rescinded its agreement with Utah](#) because Utah does not require live-fire training. Why should Congress to overrule that judgment?

Allowing more guns on the streets and highways would also increase the risks to law enforcement officers, which explains why the [International Association of Chiefs of Police](#) and the [Major Cities Chiefs Association](#) are among the organizations that oppose the measure.

The Supreme Court in 2008 [recognized an individual right to keep and bear arms](#) in the home for self-defense. But the Second Amendment, like every other constitutional provision, has its limits. “Nothing in our opinion should be taken to cast doubt on long-standing prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill or laws forbidding the carrying of firearms in sensitive places such as schools and government buildings,” the majority concluded. Regulating who is allowed a concealed weapon should be left to the states.