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Florida's dangerous export: concealed weapons permits

By Times Wire

Add this to the list of citrus, phosphate and other top Florida exports: concealed weapons permits. The Sunshine State has quietly become a thriving mail-order exporter of concealed weapons permits, which have been issued to nearly 100,000 nonresidents. Some of those packing heat up north with permission from Florida have been denied concealed weapons permits in their home states. It's bad enough that the NRA controls the Florida Legislature, but this state should not be known as the place to turn for a suntan, an orange - and permission to carry a concealed gun.

Among the 853,272 concealed weapons permits Florida had issued as of Aug. 31, more than 95,000 were mail-order permits sent to non-Florida residents. All it took was a notarized 30-item questionnaire, a photo, a fingerprint form, proof of firearms training and a fee.

The problem is the loosely regulated system of reciprocity between states. Florida has agreements with 35 other states honoring the concealed weapons permit privileges of their citizens who might be visiting from another jurisdiction. But as the *Philadelphia Inquirer* recently reported, some 900 residents of the City of Brotherly Love bypassed local concealed weapons regulations and simply received their permits from Florida, obligating local law enforcement to recognize their right to carry a concealed gun. In one case cited by the newspaper, an individual had been denied a local concealed weapons permit because of his association with drug trafficking. In another case, an 18-year-old man was shot to death by an assailant who managed to obtain a Florida concealed weapons permit after his Pennsylvania permit had been revoked. Florida was more than happy to oblige both customers.

Motorists are required to hold a driver's license issued in the state where they live. Voters can't register to vote in more than one state. The same commonsense standards should apply to concealed weapons permits. If Pennsylvania will not issue one of its residents a permit, why should Florida issue one by mail?

Isn't this the very essence of states' rights? Each state should be free to determine and enforce for itself who should or shouldn't be able to carry a concealed weapon - without the interference and

bureaucratic indifference of another state. Concealed weapons permits should not be among Florida's exports.