

Now is the time to protect our public spaces from gun violence. Too many tragic incidents have occurred and the science is too clear. We must not be deterred by emotional claims that guns in public spaces either protect anyone or preserve our democracy.

The violent insurrection launched on our nation's capital on January 6th this year is without precedent in our living memory. Lawmakers were prevented from performing their constitutional duty, lives were lost, and our country was shocked and frightened. We have also suffered an attack in Oregon on our capitol by armed protestors. These attacks were sparked by the increasingly inflammatory and anti-government rhetoric that had been building for years in the insurrectionist ideology of the gun lobby and other extremists. Such rhetoric has fueled, with growing frequency, the rise of armed insurrectionist groups across the country who use violence to menace those who do not agree with them. Now is the time to establish clear limits on the public carrying of firearms to prevent not only armed intimidation of legislators and advocates but also the increased risk of deaths and injuries associated with inadequate concealed carry laws. Today, three million Americans carry loaded handguns in public every day. In our state we have recently seen protestors prominently carrying guns in parks, public buildings and on busy sidewalks. These lax gun laws fuel insurrectionism, armed intimidation, and a culture of violence. They lead to senseless killing in communities across the country. Surely our children should not have to grow up in a country that allows this gun culture to define our schools, polling places, and other public spaces.

Research has shown that lax RTC (Right to Carry) or Concealed Weapon Licenses carry huge risks. It has shown that the mere presence of weapons increases aggressive thoughts, hostile appraisals, and aggression, suggesting a cognitive route from weapons to aggression.¹

At least 35 mass shootings in our country were carried out by concealed carry permit holders since May 2007.² At least 24 law enforcement officers have died at the hands of concealed carry killers since May 2007.

Examining decades of crime data, Stanford Law Professor John Donohue's analysis gives us several critical lessons;

It shows that violent crime in RTC states was estimated to be 13 to 15 percent higher, over a period of 10 years, than it would have been had the state not adopted the law.

To put the significance of a 15-percent increase in violent crime in perspective, the paper notes that "the average RTC state would have to double its prison population to counteract the RTC-induced increase in violent crime."

"There is not even the slightest hint in the data that RTC laws reduce overall violent crime," Donohue stated in the paper.

For most Americans, said Donohue, carrying a gun to avoid a criminal attack is similar to thinking that having a weekly brain scan will save your life, without considering the potential hazardous effects.³

Weak concealed-carry permitting laws are also associated with 11% higher rates of homicide committed with handguns compared with states with stronger permitting systems.⁴

Let us be clear on another claim, that firearms are used successfully in self-defense. In fact, individuals successfully defend themselves with a gun in less than one percent of crimes.⁶

Consider also that people who carried firearms at least once in the past month were three times more likely to have had a firearm stolen than other gun owners.⁵

It should be clear that carrying guns in public makes America less safe; research consistently notes that public carrying of firearms escalates conflict and increases violent crime. We are undeniably in a time of great political conflict that has threatened legislative processes. Now is the time to change this clear trajectory of untenable and terrible gun violence. Please support the passage of SB554 to make Oregon a safer place to live.

Thank you for your consideration,
Dr. Steven and Jean Carlton
Bend, Oregon

1. November 2018 [Personality and Social Psychology Review](#) 22(4):347-377.
2. Violence Policy Center. (2019). Concealed Carry Killers Background. Violence Policy Center: Concealed Carry Killers.
3. John J. Donohue & Abhay Aneja & Kyle D. Weber, 2019. "Right-to-Carry Laws and Violent Crime: A Comprehensive Assessment Using Panel Data and a State-Level Synthetic Control Analysis," *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, vol 16(2), pages 198-247.
4. Michael Siegel, et al., "Easiness of Legal Access to Concealed Firearm Permits and Homicide Rates in the United States," *American Journal of Public Health* 107, no. 12 (2017): 1923–1929.
5. David Hemenway, Deborah Azrael, and Matthew Miller, "Whose Guns are Stolen? The Epidemiology of Gun Theft Victims," *Injury Epidemiology* 4, no. 1 (2017).
6. David Hemenway and Sara J. Solnick, "The Epidemiology of Self-defense Gun Use: Evidence from the National Crime Victimization Surveys 2007–2011," *Preventive Medicine* 79 (2015): 22–27.