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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3504

**APPROPRIATIONS**  
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY

**ENVIRONMENT AND  
PUBLIC WORKS**

RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**HOMELAND SECURITY AND  
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT  
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE AND  
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

August 7, 2009



Thank you for contacting me regarding concealed carry permits for firearms. I appreciate hearing from you on this matter.

As you know, the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution states: "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." While I support modest initiatives to keep guns out of the hands of children and those with a history of, or potential for, violence or mental illness, I do not believe that any federal gun control regulations should prevent law-abiding citizens from purchasing legal firearms.

In fact, I joined a number of my Senate colleagues in signing an *amicus* brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in the case *Heller v. District of Columbia* in support of the individual right of law-abiding citizens to possess a firearm for lawful purposes such as self-defense within the home. As you may know, in this case the Court held the Second Amendment does indeed protect this right. In addition, I have supported several recent Senate amendments related to gun possession and regulation.

On February 26, 2009, I voted for Amendment #575 by Senator Ensign (R-NV) to S. 160, the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009. Amendment #575 proposes to restore Second Amendment rights to the District of Columbia. The amendment was agreed to and attached to S. 160, which passed the Senate but currently awaits further action in the House of Representatives. On May 12, 2009, I voted for Amendment #1067 by Senator Coburn (R-OK) to H.R. 627, the Credit Card Accountability Responsibility and Disclosure Act of 2009, which was later signed into law by President Obama. This amendment, successfully adopted to the bill and included in the public law, allows qualified individuals to carry concealed guns into national parks.

On February 23, 2009, Senator John Thune (R-SD) introduced S. 371, the Respecting States' Rights and Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2009. S. 371 would allow anyone who is not otherwise prohibited by federal law from carrying a firearm, and who possesses a state permit to carry a concealed firearm, to carry a concealed firearm in any state in accord with the corresponding regulations of that state. On July 22, 2009, Senator Thune offered the text of S. 371 as Amendment #1618 to S. 1390, the Fiscal Year 2010 Defense Authorization bill. The

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amendment failed by a vote of 58–40, with 60 votes required for adoption. After examining the arguments on both sides, I decided to oppose the amendment.

While I have long been a supporter of the individual right to keep and bear arms, I voted against Amendment #1618 for several reasons. First, I believe the determination of concealed carry policy is a states' rights issue. As a former governor, I believe strongly that the states are best suited to determine specific licensing requirements so long as they are consistent with the Second Amendment. For example, the State of Vermont requires no permit for concealed carry and allows handgun possession beginning at age 16. Ohio, by contrast, does require a permit for concealed carry and restricts handgun possession to eligible individuals of at least age 21.

Second, I believe the states are already addressing the issue of concealed carry permission across state lines by entering into reciprocity agreements. For example, Ohio, which has allowed concealed carry since 2004, recognizes the permits of 18 other states, and those states plus seven others recognize the Ohio permit.

Third, this amendment was opposed strongly by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, and 50 Ohio mayors. As a former mayor myself, I appreciate very well the concerns of local public officials and law enforcement officers who believe the amendment would be harmful to public safety.

In sum, I believe without a national concealed carry reciprocity law, the individual right to keep and bear arms remains fully protected and is not diminished, while states' rights are guarded from encroachment by the federal government, and the public safety concerns of local governments and law enforcement agencies are alleviated.

Thank you for contacting me. As a fellow Ohioan, I appreciate hearing from you. Please feel free to contact me again regarding this issue or any other issue that may be of concern to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George V. Voinovich". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

George V. Voinovich  
United States Senator