



Guns can help protect lives of lawful citizens

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OK readers, picture this: You're walking home from the grocery store late at night. Someone steps out from behind a tree, pulls a pistol from his jacket and robs you. He shoots you in the leg, so you can't find help before he disappears.

Boy, it's too bad for you. He had a gun and you didn't. Even if you did have a gun, it's mostly illegal in Nebraska to carry a concealed weapon.

But all that is going to change. You see, the Nebraska Legislature is currently working on passing bill LB476 that would allow Nebraska residents to carry a concealed weapon.

Of course, getting a Carry Conceal Weapon (CCW) permit isn't as easy as it might sound. First of all, Nebraska requires potential handgun purchasers to submit to a criminal background check to obtain a permit to purchase a handgun. This background check can take up to five days, which prevents "crimes of passion" from being instantly committed.

When actually purchasing the gun, there is now a nationwide FBI background search done at the time of purchase. Certain misdemeanors, such as drug possession, dishonorable discharges from the military and most felonies make a person ineligible to purchase a handgun.

After you finally get a handgun, you have to go through the process of getting the CCW permit. Some states are very lenient. They require a mere background check and a fee. Others have very rigorous shooting and accuracy tests one must pass before getting a CCW.

LB476 will require criminal and mental health background checks, along with a gun safety course.

I'm sure many of you think the idea of carrying a concealed handgun is outrageous - after all, this is backwoods Nebraska, right? Who needs to really defend themselves from attackers? Well, here's a little bit of information for you to digest.

First of all, a vast number of criminals have guns, we all know that, and oftentimes they'll carry their weapons concealed. Thus, the law-abiding citizen never knows if that guy following them is dangerous or not.

Now turn the tables. What if it was the bad guys who didn't know which citizen was carrying a semi-automatic handgun with a full clip of hollow points? If you were on the dark side of the law, wouldn't you start thinking twice about who you attacked if the chance of getting injured or killed was increased?

Professor John Lott Jr. is one of the leading researchers on crime control. He spent 18 years collecting data from all the counties in all the United States on the relationship between handgun laws, including carry-conceal laws, and FBI crime rates. These are some of his findings:

- One factor in crime prevention is the local arrest and conviction rate.
- Another major factor is the ability of the criminal to tell who is or is not armed.
- Potential victims who use firearms to defend themselves are statistically less likely to be injured in an attack.

Another very important fact to point out is that suicide and accidental death from gun use doesn't increase when there are carry-conceal laws. Also, the idea that crimes of passion will increase is unfounded. Think about it - if your loved one makes you so upset you want to kill him or her, is breaking a concealed-weapon law the first thing on your mind?

The criminal and mental health background check is part of the CCW application process to keep mentally unstable people and those with violent tendencies from having a concealed weapon. I would like to point out that in Nebraska you must submit to a background check before you can even get your permit to purchase a handgun, plus a new FBI background check when you actually purchase a gun.

The main point of LB476 is to allow law-abiding citizens to carry a concealed weapon for defense purposes. The bill won't help out the criminals one bit.

According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, there are between 65 and 70 million handguns in the United States. That's less than 0.4 percent of those which are used to commit a crime. This means that the vast majority of handguns are in the possession of law-abid-

ing citizens, not psychotic criminals with itchy trigger fingers.

Having LB476 pass will actually lower certain types of crime. John Lott discusses the lowering of crime rates in his book "More Guns, Less Crime."

According to Lott, "For each additional year that a concealed-handgun law is in effect, the murder rate declines by 3 percent, rape by 2 percent and robberies by over 2 percent." Call me crazy, but isn't lowering the number of murders and rapes a good thing?

So, 3 percent of Lincoln's



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Have you ever felt like going "postal"? You know what I mean - pretending like you're Rambo and shooting everyone and everything that moves because, well, just because.

People are creatures at the whim of their mental and emotional state of mind. We experience all kinds of emotions - love, grief, sorrow, happiness and, of course, anger.

When people get angry, they don't always use their best judgment. In fact, they often make decisions that are detrimental not only to their

Rage can become deadly when guns are involved

They'll talk about how everyone is completely baffled by what happened, because no one ever imagined that *you* could do something like that.

They'll note that you applied for and received a permit to carry a concealed weapon.

As of today, Nebraska is one of only seven states that have not passed some sort of concealed-weapon legislation. But unfortunately, we have state senators like Ray Janssen, a former farmer and current owner of a meat market.

Our butcher friend Sen. Janssen introduced LB476, legislation that, when passed and signed into law by the ultra-conservative Republican Gov. Mike Johanns, will allow Nebraskans who have resided here for at least one year and who pass a criminal background check to carry concealed handguns.

There's a whole bunch of other hurdles to obtaining the license, but in my judgment, they're largely ineffective. For example, if you've fulfilled any sentence for any offense involving violence or threats of violence three or more years before applying for the license, those convictions don't matter. You get the license.

Just to clarify, I'm not referring to felonies when talking about offenses involving violence. Anyone convicted of a felony cannot

obtain a concealed weapon license under the proposed legislation.

If you're not currently, and have not been, subject to a protection order in the last three years, you're eligible for a concealed-handgun license. (Did you hear that, O.J.?)

If you have not been committed to a mental institution as a result of the use of controlled substances or abuse of alcohol in the last three years, you're eligible for a license.

If you've had no second or subsequent offense DUIs in the last three years, you get a license. If you've had no conviction under the Uniform Controlled Substances Act in the last three years, again, you get a license.

Here's the most amazing one of all: If you were found not responsible or not guilty by reason of insanity, have been discharged from the mental institution for five years or more, have been unconditionally released from further court-ordered treatment, and not been judged incompetent, well, you know. You get a license.

The kicker is that the Department of Health & Human Services, charged with maintaining the database of mental health commitments for the purposes of the Concealed Handgun License Act, is not required to keep records on those people found not responsible or not guilty by reason of insanity in their database for more than five years.

Listen to this one: The bill says you can have a license if you don't use alcohol or other substances to the extent that your normal faculties are impaired on a chronic or habitual basis. How the hell are they going to know that, unless *you* tell them?

Sen. Ray Janssen is a crusty-looking guy, who looks a little like John Wayne. Maybe that explains why he wants to be able to "John Wayne" it in dangerous situations better left to law-enforcement professionals.

But forget about Sen. Janssen for a moment - he's just one of the gun guys. The pundits are predicting the bill has plenty of votes to pass. That means there are plenty of other fools occupying seats in the Unicameral.

The Unicameral considered similar legislation last year. They declined to pass it then, and I thought they demonstrated that they were more intelligent than the forty or so other state legislatures that had passed such legislation at the time.

Look, folks. Even if no one who slips through one of the "loopholes" I've walked you through offs somebody with a concealed handgun, somebody will. The proponents of this legislation are arguing that the number of crimes committed by registered gun users is so small that it's inconsequential. They will also tell you the likelihood of someone licensed to carry a concealed weapon going postal is so remote that it doesn't matter.

But it will happen. And in my opinion, if even *one* person is killed by a concealed weapon licensee in a fit of rage, that's one too many.

Somebody's going to go postal. I hope it's not *you*.

GUNS!

Defense or Offense?

murder rate is only one or two people per year. That's still one or two people alive

own best interests, but the interests of others as well.

Sometimes anger turns to pure *rage*. When someone is in a state of rage, rational thought goes right out the window.

All of us have heard a lot about road rage. People get frustrated with all the stupid things other drivers do, get angry and then their anger turns to rage. This rage leads them to start yelling and making obscene gestures at other drivers before initiating their own little demolition derby, chasing the other driver down, ramming that person's car, then jumping out and beating the crap out of them.

Sometimes angry drivers pull out guns and shoot other motorists.

People get angry and frustrated just dealing with everyday ordinary life. Sometimes a rude clerk at a convenience store is enough to prompt some people to start screaming at the clerk, demanding service *now*, then tearing out of the parking lots, tires screeching.

We all get angry and frustrated sometimes. And I don't think there's a single one of us who can deny ever having felt pure, blinding, irrational *rage*.

Maybe you have felt like going postal.

Perhaps that feeling manifested itself into conscious deliberation. After you started thinking about it, did you imagine in your mind how the scene would play out?

How would you feel?

Did you envision yourself being riddled with bullets by a police SWAT team after you finished massacring all the innocent people that somehow offended you or got in your way that day?

If you thought that far ahead, maybe you thought about the ensuing media attention - you know, the way the media would dissect your life, trying to explain why someone who, at least up to the last minute, had been a reasonably law-abiding citizen.

They'll talk about how you paid your bills on time, had a good job and a family who loved you. They'll say you were never in trouble with the law, your friends and neighbors all thought you were an excellent person, and no one could ever imagine you hurting someone.

They might say that you had never been incarcerated or received treatment in a mental institution.

who would have been killed. Saving a few lives each year seems like a good idea to me. As far as rape goes, all rapists should be killed, but that's another column.



Lott also explains how crime de-localizes itself when carry-conceal laws are in place. Criminals will move out of a "bad neighborhood" because of the fear of being shot at by law-abiding neighbors.

What it all comes down to is that a carry-conceal law would be effective in deterring violent crime to some degree, while offering peace of mind for those citizens who live or work in a not-so-nice part of town.

The state and FBI would have more knowledge on handgun ownership and CCW permits, thus being able to regulate things better. The background checks would keep the wrong people from legally attaining a handgun and CCW permit, and the gun safety course would inform people of the way to use a gun.

Now to answer that question I'm sure you're asking, yes, I own a handgun. No, I don't carry it around with me. I only bought it for target shooting. Yes, I would get a CCW permit and finally, no, I wouldn't carry it around with me 24-7.

I would, however, like to be able to legally carry it if the need surfaced.