

# Concealed carry: Granite Staters speak out on imminent repeal of permit requirement

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As legislation to repeal New Hampshire's decades-old concealed carry permit statute heads to Gov. Chris Sununu's desk, some Granite Staters with more than a passing familiarity with guns are voicing concern while others are thrilled with the bill's promised signing.

Northwood Police Chief Glen Drolet, president of the New Hampshire Association of Chiefs of Police, believes the change will make police work more dangerous.

Under the current law, officers arriving at a police call or making a stop have the benefit of knowing whether their local chief has issued a permit for someone to carry a concealed handgun, said Drolet.

"It was kind of our one leg up," Drolet said Friday. If that permit requirement is now eliminated, local police answering a call won't know if a gun might be involved.

A police officer buying a gun Friday at Riley's Sport Shop in Hooksett agreed.

The officer, who declined to give his name, said to think about it from a cop's point of view:

A police officer approaches a car and the driver says he has a gun and a permit to carry it.

An officer approaches another driver who says, "I have a gun." The New Hampshire officer asked: "What does that tell you?"

Currently, 27 states recognize New Hampshire's resident pistol revolver licenses, according to state

police, which means those with permits can legally carry the guns in those states.

The National Association for Gun Rights, in a news release issued Thursday after the House voted 200-97 to repeal the law, said Senate Bill 12 recognizes the right of every law-abiding citizen in New Hampshire to carry a firearm for self-defense without having to beg the government for a permit. The Senate passed the repeal last month.

"New Hampshire is on the verge of becoming the 11th state to remove this government permission slip nonsense once and for all," said NAGR President Dudley Brown. "If you have a legal handgun, Constitutional Carry says you can carry it without having to beg a bureaucrat for a permit."

In New Hampshire, under current law, a resident can carry a gun openly without needing a gun license but must have a license to conceal a handgun. It is issued by a local police chief, who can deny it to people he or she deems unsuitable.

States that don't require gun licenses include Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Mississippi, Missouri, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

New Hampshire lawmakers have passed the repeal twice before only to be vetoed by then Gov. Maggie Hassan, a Democrat.

State Rep. Robert Elliott, R-Salem, said during House debate, the repeal will protect citizens from "a society that has gone crazy."

Steve Adams, a retired Northfield police chief who works part time at Riley's, said only law-abiding citizens take the time to get a permit. "People who are

not law-abiding citizens could care less and never worried about a permit," he said.

Linda Ducharme, co-owner of Eaton's Cake and Candy Supplies in Hooksett, thinks "It's terrible. I really do. It makes me afraid."

Ducharme, who lives in Manchester, said she can't even get her basement finished without a permit. "Why wouldn't a person who has a gun not need a permit? It's crazy."

The store is in a small shopping plaza on the Londonderry Turnpike, sandwiched between The Cake Fairy, a bakery, and Wicked Weaponry, a gun shop.

Ben Beauchemin of Wicked Weaponry is a former Hooksett police officer. He hasn't really kept track of the legislation because the licenses are issued by local police chiefs.

"I don't care if New Hampshire wants to allow citizens to legally carry without the permit," he said. His concern, however, is, if the law is repealed, would he be able to carry a gun in other states that had reciprocity laws with New Hampshire.

"I like the ability to carry in other states," he said.

According to the National Association for Gun Rights, he will. SB 12 does not remove the existing permit process for those seeking reciprocity with neighboring states; it removes the requirement to obtain the permit when carrying concealed in New Hampshire. So, police chiefs will still be issuing licenses to residents who want them.

The town of Northwood issues a couple hundred new permits and renewals a year, Drolet said. He has turned down permits for residents who should not be allowed to purchase a firearm under federal law. And he's turned down permits for people who can legally purchase weapons but are a known suicide risk or are known drug users.

"The last couple years, I dealt with more (applications) per year than I ever had," he said.

He said the police chiefs group expected the repeal to pass, noting that Sununu, a Republican, campaigned in favor of the measure. Drolet said he's not sure what he can do to persuade the governor to change course.

"I don't know what we can do," he said, "but we're going to try to do what we can."

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*New Hampshire Union Leader reporter Mark Hayward contributed to this report.*

- See more at: <http://www.unionleader.com/Concealed-carry:-Imminent-repeal-of-permit-requirement-has-NH-residents-concerned,-thrilled#sthash.wu4x9kLk.dpuf>