



Concealed Carry Reform, NOW!

A division of Gun Owners Civil Rights Alliance

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RIGHT-TO-CARRY IN MINNESOTA -- A BRIEF HISTORY

Gathered from oral histories and personal experience
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Revised 5 July 2003; Bettermann acknowledged as 1996 author, changed from point to paragraph form for reading ease, closing reworked.

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1974 -- MINNESOTA IS JUST LIKE VERMONT

Minnesota enjoys a Vermont-style carry law. No permits, no restrictions on carry.

1975 -- CARRY PERMITS LEGISLATED; ISSUANCE DISCRETIONARY

A discretionary carry permit system is passed and signed by the governor. One of the authors is future governor Arne Carlson. Permits may be issued for reason of "personal safety hazards" or occupational need. Nobody thinks that discretion will be abused.

1980 -- MINNESOTA SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS DISCRETIONARY CARRY PERMITS

The Atkinson Case comes up. The plaintiff applies for a carry permit, citing personal safety. The permit is denied. It is appealed all the way to the Minnesota Supreme Court. The Minnesota Supreme Court upholds the denial, actually admitting that discretion in determining a "personal safety hazard is obviously intended to restrict the class of person entitled to a carry permit." This gives legal sanction to future abuses.

1984 -- FIREARMS REGULATION ABUSES INCREASE

Through this year, many Minnesota cities can write their own firearms regulations. Abuses by Minneapolis and St Paul lead the legislature to pass a preemption law, reserving all firearms regulation to state government. Governor Rudy Perpich vetoes the bill. Minneapolis Mayor Don Fraser and St Paul Mayor George Latinmer promise to bring their cities' ordinances more in line with state law.

1985 -- MINNESOTA BECOMES A PREEMPTION STATE

The abuses in Minneapolis and St. Paul continue; Mayor Fraser and Mayor Latinmer don't keep their word. The legislature passes a preemption bill again. This time, Governor Rudy Perpich signs the preemption bill.

1988 -- MINNESOTA APPEALS COURT UPHOLDS OCCUPATIONAL NEED

The Hoffman Case comes up. The plaintiff, chief of a lumberyard, is required to obtain a carry permit and carry while working. The permit is denied; the police chief decides "there is no reason for a yardman to carry a gun while working." A Minnesota Appeals Court disagrees. Minnesota's carry law makes it clear that permits must be issued to those who must carry as a condition of employment. As one person would put it years later: "If you're guarding someone else's money, you get a permit. If you have to defend yourself, you can't."

1991 -- REDEFINING DISCRETION

Beginning slowly, Attorney General Skip Humphrey attempts to restrict discretion statewide. He lobbies Twin Cities Metro police chiefs to deny permits requested for personal safety. He encourages out-state cities to do the same, so he can claim "statewide uniformity."

1996 -- GETTING A PERMIT DEPENDS ON WHERE YOU LIVE, WHO YOU KNOW; CHANGE BEGINS

During a House committee hearing, a police chief claims that he "doesn't have to issue permits to carry, and won't issue permits," no matter what. The openly admitted bias and abuse outrages some House members. They introduce the Macklin Amendment. It's a simple change: "may issue" becomes "must issue." The Macklin Amendment passes the House.

Concealed Carry Reform NOW (CCRN) is organized. CCRN adopts a simple philosophy:

"If you want to lead, help lead."

"If you want to do something, just do it."

"If you don't agree 100%, that's fine. Let's work together and work it out."

"Remember: The goal is shall-issue right-to-carry, nothing less."

A petition drive begins. So do CCRN appearances at county fairs.

During the election, a new issue shows up on candidate's radar: shall-issue right-to-carry. "Where did that come from?" says one candidate. "Your voters," replies a CCRNer who attended his party's caucus.

1997 -- BURIED IN THE IN-BASKET

Representative Hilda Bettermann and Senator Pat Pariseau introduce a "responsible, competent adults" shall-issue right-to-carry bill.

Attorney General Skip Humphrey promotes a "could-issue" carry bill. Two weeks later, he asks CCRN to "get onboard." CCRN has the audacity to refuse. They tell AG Humphrey "it's shall-issue or bust."

Representative Wes Skoglund stonewalls the shall-issue right-to-carry bill in a House committee; it never leaves his in-basket.

A series of informal committee and town meetings are held throughout Minnesota, to gauge support for shall-issue right-to-carry. Turnout in favor surprises everyone, even supporters. Also surprising are the highly technical questions from supporters. They know their stuff, contribute, and a list of bill improvements begins.

The petition drive continues. Right-to-carry supporters staff tables at clubs, meetings, and county fairs. A statewide email network is organized and gains momentum. The twice yearly CCRN newspaper begins.

1998 -- THE ISSUE THAT WON'T GO AWAY

During the legislative session, the stonewalling continues. But helpful suggestions pour in and right-to-carry is stronger for it.

Informal committee & town meetings continue. So does volunteer work at clubs, meetings, and county fairs.

Two huge town-hall meetings in the Twin Cities occur. Support for right-to-carry is overwhelming (10 to 1). Nobody expected this.

Overall, news coverage is surprisingly balanced.

CCRN members participate in Republican and DFL conventions. Right-to-carry resolutions are passed in both Republican and DFL grassroots caucuses.

During the fall election, everyone is shocked. A vocally pro-carry third-party governor, Jesse Ventura, is elected. The moderately pro-carry Republican, Norm Coleman, takes second place. The anti-right-to-carry DFLer (that's what Democrats are called in Minnesota) former Attorney General Skip Humphrey, takes third. A pro-carry House is elected.

1999 -- RIGHT-TO-CARRY GETS HEARD

Representative Lynda Boudreau (Hilda Betterman having retired) and Senator Pariseau reintroduce right-to-carry bills. Dozens of bipartisan authors sign up.

Formal committee hearings are held. Testimony is taken. Both sides fly in their experts. Changes make the bill even stronger.

The news media continues its balanced coverage.

Letters from right-to-carry supporters inundate legislators. "Give us a fair hearing in the Senate" is the message.

The House passes right-to-carry. The DFL controlled Senate still refuses to deal with it.

2000 -- SOME STOP LISTENING

During the legislative session, Senate committees start thinking about the bill. In the end, they do nothing.

Law enforcement organizations take a hard look at shall-issue right-to-carry. Many make good suggestions, but a vocal few see a threat to their management power. It seems like a Dilbert comic strip, and Dilbert's boss is in charge.

The pressure continues by supporters.

Governor Jesse Ventura gets his carry permit, but then seems uninterested in the boxes of petitions by people who want their permits.

Again, right-to-carry resolutions are passed in grassroots party caucuses. In the 2000 election, the pro-carry House majority increases.

2001 -- THE HOUSE LISTENS, THE SENATE BULLIES

Representative Boudreau and Senator Pariseau again introduce right-to-carry bills. More hearings are held in House committees. Major changes are made in training requirements and property-rights areas.

The House passes right-to-carry again.

The Senate engages in stonewalling. One committee dismisses the bill in a few minutes. Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe stops the bill in another committee, by ensuring that the committee does not have members present to meet and discuss the bill. It's bullying at it's worst.

Legislators start getting a new message: "You've had hearings. You've had suggestions. You've had years. Quit stalling!"

2002 -- LET'S MAKE A DEAL

During the legislative session, changes are made to address law enforcement concerns, including the return of limited discretion.

It becomes clear that some folks are playing games; they will never support right-to-carry, no matter how many concessions are made.

Pro-right-to-carry forces put the pressure on the Senate. Even Senate leader Roger Moe is surprised. An attempt to "gut" the bill by a formerly pro-gunowner Senator Steve Murphy is made. The "gutting" fails.

Some senate candidates discover their grassroots political caucus support evaporating, because of their reluctance to support right-to-carry. These Senate candidates backpedal furiously.

CCRN members participate in Republican and DFL conventions. During the election, right-to-carry becomes a "hot-button, litmus-test" issue for voters.

Strong right-to-carry candidates win in the 2002 election. Lukewarm supporters don't win. Opponents can't make their scare tactics work. Years of grassroots work have finally paid off.

Minnesota now has a pro-right-to-carry House, Senate, and Governor.

2003 -- NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

The Minnesota Citizens Personal Protection Act (MCPPA) is introduced by Representative Boudreau and Senator Pariseau. After meeting with business, education, law enforcement, and other's, MCPPA supporters make numerous modifications to the bill that concisely address everyone's concerns from the previous years.

Some still wrongly call MCPPA "the most liberal carry law in the nation." The MCPPA is not even close to what Minnesota citizens enjoyed back in 1974.

The bill authors throw in the kitchen sink: a lifetime ban on firearm possession by some felons originally proposed by MPPA opponents.

MPPA passes the House by a comfortable bipartisan margin. The Senate leadership tries to stall again.

The House combines MPPA with a game and fish licensing bill. MPPA heads to the Senate.

The Senate holds the longest floor debate in 25 years. Every issue the Senate has avoided is addressed. Opponents again act like vaudeville theater comedians, and bad ones at that, voicing the same hysteria and doomsday predictions.

MPPA passes the Senate by a good bipartisan margin. Pro-MPPA DFLers stay strong, despite the browbeating of the MetroCrats. Some moderate Republicans find their concerns addressed and vote for the bill; some don't.

Governor Tim Pawlenty signs the bill.

28 MAY 2003 -- MPPA TAKES EFFECT

Citizens get trained and apply for permits to carry. Starting in mid-June, the first permits begin arriving.

After so many years of discussion and debate, opponents paint MPPA as "rushed" and "hastily written." How wrong they are!