



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF THE UNITED STATES

November 28, 2017

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To: Members of the U.S. House of Representatives or U.S. Senate

From: Chris, Carson, President

Re: H.R. 38, the Constitutional Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017

The League of Women Voters urges you to oppose legislation that would federally mandate the carrying of concealed firearms in every U.S. state. H.R. 38, the Constitutional Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017, would open the door to many risks for Americans and jurisdictions around the country. Legislation granting federally mandated reciprocity will endanger public safety, hamper efforts of law enforcement to prevent gun violence and override existing state legislation and permitting processes.

Preempting individual state laws ignores safety training and the right of each state to determine its own standards. Currently, each state determines whether it will recognize permits from other states and sets its own standards for issuing permits. For example, some states issue permits without photo IDs, while 12 states do not require carriers to have a permit, which means carriers may not have undergone a background check. Still more states require a rigorous permitting process that includes a background check and other requirements. But in the end, it seems that states with the most lax requirements for issuing permits would set the national standard, thus allowing individuals who lack proper training or who have criminal records and a history of other abuses to carry concealed weapons across the country.

Local communities could suffer severe consequences if federally mandated concealed carry is enacted. Presently, it is illegal in some states for individuals convicted of violent misdemeanors to possess handguns. But H.R. 38 would allow concealed carry in those states if the individual carrier were lawfully able to carry a handgun in his or her own state. This would override current protections in those communities where concealed carry is prohibited for certain criminals.

Not only does federally mandated concealed carry pose a safety risk to every American, it will create unique issues for law enforcement officers. Since there is no nationwide database containing information on permit holders, verifying the authenticity of such holders could involve police in a complicated process. This legislation will make it impossible to determine whether an individual carrying a concealed gun is doing so legally or represents a threat to public safety. H.R. 38 is opposed by law enforcement organizations including the International Association of Police Chiefs, National Law Enforcement Partnership to Prevent Gun Violence, and Fraternal Order of Police.

Rather than making the carrying of handguns easier and more expansive in a country where approximately 36,000 people in the U.S. died in 2015 as a result of gunfire, we should be finding ways to making our country safer from gun violence. Creating a society where the carrying of concealed firearms would potentially become ubiquitous would not accomplish that goal.

The League of Women Voters asks you to oppose HR 38, the Constitutional Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017. This legislation is bad for law enforcement, public safety and a threat to our democracy.