

## ***Guns Without Controls***

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As horrifying as it is to contemplate, the next gunfight may not be at the O-K Corral; it might be in our own community. Shock and dismay are the emotions most often expressed at recent events either seen or read about in Reston of people walking our streets and dining in our restaurants with pistols on their hips. And it is perfectly legal.

In many of my columns I have talked about a rightward tilt of the Virginia General Assembly. In no area is that tilt to ultra-conservatism more evident than with gun control. The minimal laws that existed in the past at the state level have been stripped away, and local government has been denied the ability to pass gun control measures. No one that I am aware of has ever proposed registration or limitation on ownership of guns in Virginia. The laws that have been repealed have been reasonable and would have in no way restricted gun ownership for hobbyists, collectors, or hunters.

On July 31-August 1 "The Nation's Gun Show" will be held at Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly. The promoters expect 1,000 tables where guns will be sold. A promotional piece explains why the show is being held in Virginia: "This show has been in the planning stages for several years. However, very restrictive laws regulating the purchase of handguns prevented us going to this great area. This year, legislation was passed in Virginia's General Assembly that repealed all waiting periods and permit requirements in Virginia. (Virginia now has total pre-emption.)"

Apparently members of the Civil Defense League have decided to demonstrate their right by displaying their guns openly. Police have responded to calls about their presence but are powerless to do anything. How do you know if the person sitting at the next table at a restaurant, entering your place of business, or walking on your street with a gun is an emotionally stable, law abiding citizen or is a psychotic who is about to be the next mass murderer?

There is no way to tell. Hopefully the police will continue to respond to calls about gun-toting citizens, and hopefully they will not arrive too late. The fanatical gun lover will tell you that is exactly why everyone should carry a gun – to defend himself. They may think it is too bad that the people who get shot are often innocent bystanders who unluckily find themselves in the area of gunfire.

None of our constitutional rights are absolute. Not being allowed to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theatre is the most often cited limitation on free speech. And controls on your guns can be imposed that would protect the public but allow enthusiasts to collect guns and to hunt as a sport.

The U.S. Congress has let the ban on assault weapons expire. The pro-gun lobby will continue to push the limits. Reasonable people must make their views known as well. Let your outrage be heard by your Congressional, state, and local representatives. When reasonable voices are the strongest heard, we will return to reasonable gun control. That is what I continue to support. Let me know your views – [kenplum@aol.com](mailto:kenplum@aol.com).