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Colorado Senate Votes to Endanger the Public

What is most dismaying about today's Senate party-line vote in support of Senate Bill 032 (Permitless Concealed Carry) is that the entire Republican majority fell sway to the siren song of the gun lobby. A quick common sense check should have dissuaded them from approving such a reckless scheme.

Proponents of the bill argued for it using the more guns equals greater safety doctrine. If that were true, we would be living in the safest country in the world. Instead, the United States, which has by far the highest gun ownership rate of any country, has a homicide rate 20 times the average of 22 peer countries. Furthermore, studies at Stanford, Johns Hopkins and Georgetown Universities have shown that shall-issue "right to carry" laws are associated with higher rates of violent crime. Eileen McCarron, president of Colorado Ceasefire Capitol Fund, stated "No matter how many times it is stated and how many senators proclaim it, more guns do not make us safer."

It was also disconcerting to observe bill sponsor Senator Vicki Marble speak in support of the measure with totally incorrect statistics. Marble argued that firearms aren't the problem and demonstrated that point by enumerating U.S. homicide statistics of 11,493 by firearms and 16,799 by non-firearms (given as "knives, bats, and hammers, etc."). Sen. Marble is totally wrong on these numbers. The CDC Faststats give 2013 total homicide deaths as 16,121 and firearm homicide deaths as 11,208, leaving just 4913 as non-firearm homicides. Despite the rhetoric from the senator, FIREARMS ARE the problem.

If SB032 becomes law, every adult in the state can self-evaluate on their suitability for carrying a hidden handgun. No background check, no training and no sheriff discretion. Sen. Marble indicated that permit background checks weren't needed as gun owners had already undergone these when they purchased their weapons. This is somewhat disingenuous, as only since July 1, 2013 have all gun sales been subjected to these checks, while Sen. Marble is actually cosponsoring another bill to repeal those very checks.

Sen Michael Merrifield stated that since the inception of the concealed carry permitting system, over 3800 Coloradoans have paid up to \$150 to apply for a permit, only to discover they are a prohibited gun owner, and hence were denied a permit. McCarron noted that "under permitless concealed carry, these same 3800 individuals could get up in the morning, decide they are legal to carry a hidden handgun, strap on their weapon, walk out and put every single one of us in danger."

Arizona enacted such a law in 2010, and it didn't take long for tragedy to ensue. On January 8, 2011, a shooter killed six people and grievously wounded Rep. Gabby Giffords. But his carrying

the hidden handgun was totally legal under Arizona's law, even though he had been suspended from his college for mental issues and rejected from the military for substance abuse.

We urge Colorado's House of Representatives to put the people's safety first and stop this ill-advised legislation in its tracks.

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