



Written by [Beverly K. Eakman](#) on July 22, 2011

D.C. Police Move Gun Shop Into Their Headquarters, Breaking Law

Whether one is for or against so-called gun control, the situation in high-crime District of Columbia is emblematic of the duplicity that surrounds modern-day law enforcement and our constitutional rights.

Washington, [D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department](#) has come up with a brainstorm to ensure that the Nation's Capitol does not wind up violating the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark 2008 decision (*District of Columbia v. Heller*) invalidating D.C.'s gun ban, illegally imposed in 1976 — opening the District's only gun shop in a police station.



It seems that Charles W. Sykes, Jr. wound up the city's sole remaining federally licensed firearms dealer, thanks to the stratospheric costs of business space that have shuttered many independent shops. So, MPD invited Sykes to relocate his CS Exchange gun business inside MPD headquarters on Indiana Avenue for \$100 month.

It gets better. D.C. laws prohibit dealers from opening a firearms enterprise within 300 feet of a residence, school, playground, public library, or house of worship — restrictions that have no effect on the use of guns near or around any of these places. But since anyone purchasing a firearm must go to the police station to register it, D.C. Police Chief Cathy L. Lanier reasoned that, in the interest of efficiency, the MPD *could ignore the fact that its headquarters building sits within 300 feet of a church!*

Apparently, Larry, Moe, and Curly can decide which laws to ignore and which must be rigorously followed by everyone else — except criminals, of course.

The District of Columbia ranked 22nd of all U.S. cities in [2010-2011 crime statistics](#), and came in 15th among the most violent cities according to an [FBI release on May 27, 2011](#). Much of the murder rate, when considered separately from other violent crimes, is due to drug dealing. The crack cocaine epidemic in 1991 gave Washington, D.C., the label "murder capital of the U.S."

A [revealing graph](#) covering the years 1960-2006 compares the murder rate relative to the D.C. gun ban in 1976 and the largely ineffective War on Drugs. The caption underneath carries what, in hindsight, is a fascinating mixture of truth and fancy:

In the years since a handgun ban was passed..., gun deaths first rose, then declined slightly before soaring [again] thanks to the war on drugs. By the early 1990s the drug market had matured, the number of youths had dropped dramatically and there was better policing. As a result the murder rate dropped. There is no evidence the gun ban was a factor in any of this. The factor that seemed to have most affected the [uptick in] the murder rate [was] the war on drugs, especially in a town without strong mob organization where local dealers fought easily over turf. Once the market had matured, the murders started to decline aided by a massive drop in the number of crime-age youths.



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Whether policing ever actually improved in the 1990s is questionable. The federal Community-Oriented Policing Services ([COPS](#)) program launched during the Clinton administration bore little resemblance to pre-1965-style police protection. COPS was mainly about getting a federal foot in the door of every township's law-enforcement agencies by offering grants to hire additional officers. After mounds of paperwork (which took time away from prevention and investigation activities), the number of new-hires in each police department could be counted on fingers, and with each successful application came the proverbial "strings" of federal oversight. That meant "bean counting" in the form of ethnicity, gender, race, and other trivia having little, if any, impact on crime.

The real reason behind D.C.'s slight drop in crime rate in the late 1990s was economic revitalization projects — unaccounted for in the graph. Much of the revitalization was encouraged by Congress, which viewed the label "murder capital" as a national disgrace, especially given that federal legislators, their staffs, lobbyists, and constituent groups had to trek among multiple buildings, often late at night. Consequently, [subtle gentrification](#) efforts began transforming the demographics of distressed neighborhoods — facilitated by creative initiatives that lawmakers hoped wouldn't raise too many politically correct hackles: deferred taxes and private real estate investment, with concurrent repairs of infrastructure (e.g., roads, sewers, electrical grids, cosmetic improvements, etc.).

Among the innovative ideas that didn't turn out well were sub-prime mortgages for low-income workers and first-time house buyers, in addition to financial incentives for the owners of decayed rental housing. Senator Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) and Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) were, of course, [the more visible culprits](#) in the resulting nationwide debacle. They encouraged Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, both government-sponsored enterprises, to provide risky loans to those who could not afford the levels of their mortgage applications. But the two Senators were certainly not alone in imagining that if government could somehow finagle a way to give those at the lower end of the socio-economic scale a freebie, then cities and neighborhoods (including decaying ones in D.C.) would blossom, resulting in a reduction in property crimes and increasing property values (read *taxes*).

Initially, the combination of tax breaks, gentrification, revitalization, and subprime mortgages led to a rise in the District's population — [the first in 60 years](#). By the early 2000s, crime rates in Washington had dropped to the lowest levels in over 20 years, which wasn't saying a whole lot inasmuch as crime still remained ridiculously high compared to, say, the 1950s and was a significant factor in people's decision to live in outlying areas — hence, the much-reviled "urban sprawl," endemic not only to D.C., but to most major cities, especially in neighborhoods where economic revitalization has not yet occurred (in Washington's case, the entire eastern half of the city).

The [caption](#) beneath the graph alludes twice to a drop in "the number of crime-age youths." Between poor schools, the emergence of foreign gangs, poorly policed open-air drug markets, and ubiquitous drive-by shootings, D.C.'s reputation as a bad place to raise families resulted in a demographic shift different from the one characterized as "white flight" in the early '60s. This time the reason was fear of crime — and it left D.C. with significantly fewer children. As with other major cities, the District found itself awash in chronic social problems — e.g., decaying neighborhoods; vandalism and graffiti; fatherless, unsupervised children; massive truancy; unemployability; and illiteracy. Today, this has spilled over to suburban counties, and sub-prime mortgages to unqualified buyers exacerbated that trend, which in turn compromised tax bases.

Then came the full reality of vicious post-2006 exported drug cartels, which [broadened their operations](#) into the United States, including the Nation's Capitol, from Mexico, Colombia, the Dominican Republic,



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as well as the Middle East and West Africa. Law enforcement turned a blind eye to illegal entry at the behest of political correctness.

Which brings us back to Sykes' gun shop at the MPD. As police officers move farther away from protecting the backbone of society, its primary tax base, and toward finger-in-your-eye enforcement of petty regulations, they are increasingly viewed as foxes guarding the open-air "henhouses." Taxpayers are left spending thousands on their own security. It's no longer just the National Rifle Association lobbying for Second Amendment rights.

D.C.'s gun ban is overturned for now, but respectable citizens are nevertheless forced to run a gauntlet of bureaucratic hassles to make use of it. Heaven help the citizen who fires a weapon in self-defense!

Meanwhile, the burgeoning and under-reported violent-criminal element laughs at zoning laws and other "restrictions." Rootless, roving gangs continue picking off both their own members and America's law-abiding citizens, as they have for decades, sowing the seeds for an eventual declaration of marshal law.

Beverly K. Eakman is retired from the Justice Dept., where she oversaw grant requirements associated with the COPS program. She began her career as a teacher in 1968. She left to become a science writer for a NASA contractor, then editor-in-chief of NASA's newspaper in Houston. She later served as a speechwriter and research-writer for the director of Voice of America and two other federal agencies, including Justice. She has since penned six books, scores of feature articles and op-eds covering education policy, mental-health, data-trafficking, science, privacy and political strategy. Her e-mail, a detailed bio, speaking appearances and other links can be found on her website: www.BeverlyE.com.



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