



Exercising the Right

Young Gang of Criminals Stopped by Gun Owner

Fox News reported on July 18 about a shooting in Houston in which an armed criminal attempted to rob a man who had just withdrawn cash from an ATM. The robbery victim was also armed, and pulled out his handgun and fired it at the would-be robber. Police were soon called, and the robbery suspect was pronounced dead at the scene. This shooting demonstrates the necessity of being armed for self-defense, and followed a similar shooting that took place in Texas the previous month.

Fox News reported on June 19 about an incident that occurred in Austin involving a gang of young criminals who were driving around the city, robbing victims, and then pistol-whipping them. Their final crime, in which four of the young criminals drove to a busy area in a getaway car and robbed people, was captured on surveillance video. In the video, one of the criminals, identified as 17-year-old Jaylen Reed, exited the vehicle, approached a young couple, and forcibly took the male victim's backpack. Reed then turned his attention to the female victim, at which point the male victim pulled out his own handgun and fired it at both Reed and the occupants of the getaway vehicle. A wounded Reed hopped in the vehicle as it drove off, and the victims immediately called 911.

Law-enforcement authorities later apprehended all the suspects, and Reed was taken for treatment to a nearby medical facility. Police recovered stolen goods where the teens were found, including firearms. Investigators later identified two of the other suspects as 18-year-olds and the fourth suspect as a minor. Reed himself was a youthful offender in the recent past and had been convicted of multiple robberies last year. He was out of juvenile detention for only two days before he allegedly cut off his ankle monitor and began committing the aforementioned robberies. Investigators now believe the group committed nine robberies over the course of five days.

Reed ultimately was charged with aggravated robbery with a deadly weapon. The difference between the ninth robbery and the eight that preceded it was that the victim was armed this time and able to defend himself, putting an end to these young criminals' violent crime spree.

New York to Monitor Social Media Accounts of Prospective Gun Owners

This column previously reported on how Democrats in New York state wanted to scrutinize the social-media activity of handgun-permit applicants, and now that legislation has become a reality.

After the recent Supreme Court decision striking down a New York gun-permitting law, the Democrat-controlled state Legislature reacted by passing every onerous rule and requirement they've been dreaming about for years relating to gun permits. NBC News reported on July 8 that New York residents seeking gun permits will now "be required to hand over their social media accounts for a review of their 'character and conduct.'"

Peter Kehoe, the executive director of the New York Sheriffs' Association, was confused about how this process would be handled, considering that it's currently the sheriff's department's responsibility to screen applicants. Kehoe expressed concerns over violations of the Second Amendment as well as invasions of privacy, and expressed doubts that law enforcement would even look at the social-media



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accounts. “I don’t think we would do that.... I think it would be a constitutional invasion of privacy,” Kehoe told NBC News.

NBC News reported that the new law requires applicants to provide a list of current and former social-media accounts from the previous three years. There are still many questions about how this law will be administered, but NBC News reported that it would be up to “local sheriff’s staff, judges or county clerks to scroll through those [social media] profiles as they check whether applicants have made statements suggesting dangerous behavior.” This raises many more questions, because most social-media accounts have privacy settings that restrict what the public can see, so even if an applicant were to notify authorities of what accounts he held in the past three years, there’s no guarantee the reviewer would even be able to view any of the information on the accounts. Furthermore, many of the recent mass shooters, which the law is ostensibly trying to catch, did not post on mainstream social-media accounts but instead used private chat rooms on apps such as Discord or may have posted anonymously on message boards such as 4chan. There is no way anyone reviewing handgun-permit applications would be able to review or even be aware of online activity of that type.

It seems that this law will do absolutely nothing to prevent future crimes, but will almost assuredly cause headaches for law-abiding applicants. It is not unreasonable to see a scenario in which someone omits a social-media account from his application because he simply forgot he even had it in the past three years. Then, once the account is discovered by people reviewing the application, investigators can claim the applicant lied on his form and reject the application. Such a thing would lead to a U.S. citizen being denied his Second Amendment-protected rights simply because he forgot about a social-media account that he hardly ever used.

Adam Scott Wandt, public policy professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, warned NBC News about the dangerous potential of the new law. “I think that what we might have done as a state here in New York is, we may have confirmed [Second Amendment supporters’] worst fears — that a slippery slope will be created that will slowly reduce their rights to carry guns and allow a bureaucracy to decide, based on unclear criteria, who can have a gun and who cannot.... Which is exactly what the Supreme Court was trying to avoid.”

The silver lining to this story is that gun-rights groups all over the state either are preparing lawsuits to challenge this new law, or have already filed suit. Considering how the law it replaced was recently struck down by the Supreme Court, legal observers and supporters of the Second Amendment are hopeful this new law will suffer the same fate.



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