



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on January 6, 2014

New Detroit Police Chief Favors Gun Ownership, Announces Declines in Crime

When Detroit's new police chief, James Craig, took over on July 1 last year he made a [strong declaration](#) that crime was going to go down on his watch:

No longer will we stand idly by as criminals run rampant and the good citizens are held captive in their own homes.

Gone are the days that a citizen calls 911 and there is no response. Gone are the days that a citizen comes to a precinct only to find that the doors are locked.

We have taken an oath to protect our citizens and protect them is what we will do.



Six months later Craig reported that criminal homicides had dropped 14 percent from the previous year and that violent crime dropped 7 percent overall. [This included decreases in](#) aggravated assaults, robberies, sexual assaults, carjackings, burglaries, and stolen vehicles.

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[When interviewed](#) on Detroit's WJR radio station last week, Craig was asked by host Paul Smith about any instances in Detroit of the "knockout game," as are being reported elsewhere. Craig responded:

I think folks — the people who would engage in that foolishness — probably know that there are a number of CPL (Concealed Pistol License) holders running around the streets of Detroit. [They] probably [conclude that that's] not a real good idea.

When a surprised Smith pressed him on the CPL issue, Craig added:

I think it's a deterrent. Good Americans with CPLs translates into crime reduction, too.

I learned that very quickly in the state of Maine [where there are] a lot of CPL holders.

Craig started his law-enforcement career in Detroit as a beat cop back in January 1977 before moving to the LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department) in 1981, where he spent the next 28 years working his way up the ladder. He became Portland, Maine's chief of police in 2009, moved to Cincinnati in 2011 to take a similar position there, and then in July returned to Detroit as police chief.

He has come full circle on the issue of law-abiding citizens carrying guns: In Maine, initially he was disinclined to issue concealed weapons permits (called CCWs there — Carrying Concealed Weapon), and he let them pile up on his desk instead of allowing them to be issued. At a press conference on Thursday, Craig explained his change of heart:

Coming from California where it takes an act of Congress to get a concealed weapon permit, I got to Maine where they give out lots of CCWs.



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I had a stack of CCW permits [that] I was denying — that was my orientation.

I changed my orientation real quick. Maine is one of the safest places in America. Clearly, suspects knew that good Americans were armed.

One statistic that didn't make the headlines nationally was the 40-percent decline in [justifiable homicides](#) that Detroit has enjoyed just since Craig's arrival. A homicide is justified if it is done to prevent a very serious crime, such as rape, armed robbery, manslaughter, or murder, and most of those in the last year involved citizens who were defending themselves from criminal attacks by killing their attackers.

The reduction in violent crime is predictable, according to Doug Wyllie, editor of PoliceOne.com and author of a [large poll](#) involving more than 15,000 active or retired law-enforcement officers. These are "field-level law enforcers," said Wyllie, "those who are face-to-face against violent crime on a daily basis" and reflect that street-level reality. When asked, "What would help the most in preventing large-scale shootings in public?" nearly 30 percent of those quizzed said that "more permissive concealed carry policies for civilians" would have the most impact. When asked, "Considering the particulars of recent tragedies like Newtown and Aurora, what level of impact do you think a legally-armed citizen could have made? Nearly 90 percent responded that "innocent casualties would likely have been [either] reduced or avoided [altogether]."

Concluded Wyllie:

Contrary to what the mainstream media and certain politicians would have us believe, police overwhelmingly favor an armed citizenry, would like to see more guns in the hands of responsible people, and are skeptical of any greater restrictions placed on gun purchase, ownership, or accessibility.

It's refreshing and encouraging to hear a "street-level" officer such as Detroit Chief of Police James Craig not only support private ownership of guns but to admit candidly that what he saw, with his own eyes, caused him to change his "orientation" on gun control. Although Detroit has a long way to go before it becomes peaceful and safe (it still has the same number of murders as [New York City](#), a city with 11 times the population of Detroit), recognition of reality and the beginnings of a long-awaited and much-needed decline in crime statistics bodes well for Detroit's citizens in the months and years to come.

Photo of Detroit

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