



Written by [James Heiser](#) on July 1, 2011

Illinois Under Pressure to Recognize Right of Self-defense

With Wisconsin only days away from being the 49th state to enact legislation that allows for the concealed carry of firearms, pressure is growing for Illinois to finally concede to its citizens the right of self-defense enshrined in the federal constitution.

Illinois Governor Pat Quinn (left) stopped a legislative initiative earlier this year that would have established a system of concealed carry permits when he threatened to veto any such bill that would have come to his desk. However, in the aftermath of the decisive action taken in late June in Wisconsin's legislature, it is far from certain such a threatened veto by Gov. Quinn could succeed now.



Wisconsin's governor, Scott Walker, is scheduled to sign his state's new concealed carry bill [into law on Friday, July 8](#), and when he does so, Illinois will be the last hold out in the union, which utterly prevents its citizens from exercising their constitutionally-guaranteed right of self-defense.

Although Wisconsin's licensing system will still be far from implementing the clearly absolute right of self-defense enumerated in the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, it is nonetheless a significant step on the path toward restoring the rights of the citizens of that state. Now, many residents of Illinois are wondering how long they will have to suffer being deprived of civil liberties recognized in all their neighboring states.

Illinois has lagged behind the rest of the union when it comes to Second Amendments rights because the state has a particularly powerful gun control lobby. As Christopher Wills recently wrote in an article ("[Illinois likely to see fierce battle over gun control](#)") for the *Daily Herald*:

As state after state voted to let residents carry concealed guns, Illinois has held out, for a long list of reasons: A strong gun control movement. A dynasty of powerful Chicago mayors. A line-up of state leaders who oppose expanding access to guns.

With Wisconsin now on the verge of adopting concealed carry, Illinois soon will be all alone, the last state with a complete ban on carrying concealed weapons. That makes it the next big prize in the fierce national contest over gun control, with the National Rifle Association and its allies targeting the 50th state.

Of course, the battle for concealed carry has hardly been limited to the efforts of the National Rifle Association; national organizations such as the [Second Amendment Foundation](#) (SAF) have also been involved. SAF, for example, filed suit in federal court, challenging the state's ban on concealed carry. As SAF [noted in a press release](#) when it filed its suit in May of this year:

The lawsuit alleges that Illinois statutes that completely ban the carrying of handguns for self-



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defense are “inconsistent with the Second Amendment.” Joining SAF are two private citizens, Michael Moore of Champaign and Charles Hooks of Percy. Named as defendants are Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan and State Police Superintendent Patrick Keen. SAF is represented by attorneys David Jensen and David Sigale. The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois.

“Illinois is currently the only state in the country that imposes a complete prohibition on the carrying of firearms for personal protection by its citizens,” said SAF Executive Vice President Alan Gottlieb. “The state legislature recently stopped, by a thin margin, a concealed carry measure. After the 2008 Heller ruling and last year’s McDonald ruling against the City of Chicago that incorporated the Second Amendment to the states, one would think that Illinois lawmakers would act quickly to comply with court decisions and the constitution.”

“Illinois is the only state in the country that completely prohibits its citizens from carrying guns for self-defense,” Jensen added. “It is incredible that this situation has persisted even in light of the Supreme Court’s rulings in Heller and McDonald, and we look forward to vindicating the rights of the people of Illinois.”

The pressure of such suits, as well as virtually unanimity of state laws upholding at least some form of licensure for the concealed carry of firearms, are indicators of the gap between the laws of the state of Illinois, and the rights and needs of the citizens of that state.

A [recent article published at HuffingtonPost.com](#) contained the assertion, “Both Democrats and Republicans downstate have supported a concealed carry measure, but Chicago-area lawmakers have repeatedly said legalizing concealed carry could turn the Chicago area into the ‘wild wild West.’ ” Really? When every criminal in the “windy city” is already carrying a gun and is more than willing to demonstrate a willingness to use those firearms against their prey, it is logically incoherent to maintain that law-abiding citizens who pass extensive background checks will suddenly transmogrify into Al Capone simply by exercise the discreet carry of a concealed firearm. The consistent experience in states that have adopted legalized concealed carry has been a drop in violent crime. For example, it was noted [in an article for Human Events](#) over two years ago:

According to a study by criminologist Gary Kleck of Florida State University, “[R]obbery and assault victims who used a gun to resist were less likely to be attacked or to suffer an injury than those who used any other methods of self-protection or those who did not resist at all.” In approximately 2.5 million instances each year, someone uses a firearm, predominantly a handgun, for self defense in this nation.

In research sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, in which almost 2,000 felons were interviewed, 34% of felons said they had been “scared off, shot at, wounded or captured by an armed victim” and 40% of these criminals admitted that they had been deterred from committing a crime out of fear that the potential victim was armed.

Allowing law-abiding people to arm themselves offers more than piece of mind for those individuals — it pays off for everybody through lower crime rates. Statistics from the FBI’s Uniformed Crime Report of 2007 show that states with right-to-carry laws have a 30% lower homicide rate, 46% lower robbery, and 12% lower aggravated assault rate and a 22% lower overall violent crime rate than do states without such laws. That is why more and more states have passed right-to-carry laws over the past decade.

As Wisconsin prepares to join the rest of the union in recognizing at least a measure of freedom to those



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citizens who would assert their right of self-defense, the time has come for Governor Pat Quinn and other anti-gun ideologues to stop holding the people of Illinois hostage to an agenda that has worn out its welcome in this country.



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