



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on March 9, 2016

## West Virginia Legalizes Permitless Concealed Carry

Earlier this week, the West Virginia legislature overturned a veto by Democratic Governor Earl Ray Tomblin on permitless gun carry in the state. The bipartisan override of the veto means that starting on June 5, anyone 21 and over will be allowed to carry a concealed firearm without a permit, the *Washington Free Beacon* reported.



“Any United States citizen or legal resident thereof at least twenty-one years of age and not otherwise prohibited from possessing a firearm may carry a concealed deadly weapon without a license,” the bill reads.

Under the new law, those between the ages of 18 and 20 who were previously excluded from the permitting process now have a provisional permitting process in place. House Bill 4145 “establish[es] that criminal penalties for carrying a concealed deadly weapon without state license or other lawful authorization apply only to persons under twenty-one years of age and prohibited persons.”

Those excluded from the rule include individuals with diagnosed substance-abuse problems, serious criminal records, and alcohol-related driving infractions, the *Washington Times* noted.

The bill cleared both the state House and Senate last month before being vetoed by Governor Tomblin last Thursday during a signing ceremony.

The governor stated, “I urge you to look around this room for a moment and see that law enforcement are concerned about this bill,” the *Charleston Gazette-Mail* reported.

On Friday, the House voted 64-33 to override the governor’s veto, and the Senate followed suit on Saturday, with a vote of 23-11.

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The governor released a statement expressing his disappointment with the veto override:

West Virginia’s law enforcement officers have dedicated their lives to keeping us safe and helping us in times of need, and it’s disheartening that the members of the Legislature have chosen not to stand with these brave men and women — putting their safety and the safety of West Virginians at risk. It’s unfortunate that the concerns of officers from every law enforcement branch in the state, including the West Virginia State Police and university campus police officers, have been ignored by today’s action.

But others view the override as a victory for Second Amendment-protected rights and for citizens to be able to defend themselves.

“As the chief legal officer of the state and the person in charge of criminal matters for the state at the WV Supreme Court and in federal courts, I know that this legislation will not impact public safety,” West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrissey said after the veto. “If this bill is enacted, we will not



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only expand freedom, but we will keep our citizens protected.”

The *Washington Free Beacon* reported that the new law makes West Virginia the eighth state in the country to “implement what gun rights activists call ‘constitutional carry.’” West Virginia’s new law is part of what the *Free Beacon* said is “a national trend that began in 2003,” when only Vermont allowed concealed carry without a permit.

Praise for the new law came from gun-rights groups such as the National Rifle Association and the West Virginia Citizens Defense League, which helped write the state’s law.

“We’re extremely pleased that the legislature stood with West Virginia gun owners, showed their trust in lawful gun owners, and overrode the veto of Governor Tomblin,” Art Thomm, vice president and head lobbyist of the West Virginia Citizens Defense League, told the *Free Beacon*. “It’s certainly a great day for West Virginia gun owners.”

“Self-defense is a fundamental right that must be respected,” Chris Cox, head of the NRA’s lobbying arm, said in a statement. “Law-abiding West Virginians are now free to choose the method of self-defense that best suits their needs. The NRA and our five million members are pleased that the legislature voted in support of West Virginians’ Second Amendment freedoms.”



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