

'Fudds' left behind in Idaho's gun market

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

Today, Idaho enters the brave new world of conceal carry and forget.

As of now, you can strap on a shoulder holster, pick up a handgun and carry it under your jacket.

No training is required.

There's no live shooting experience demanded.

Nobody will run a background check on you.

As long as you're 21 or older, you no longer need any kind of permit.

In passing that law, Idaho legislators ignored the concerns of people such as firearms instructor David Steed, who told them: " ... Listen to the questions we get. 'Can I carry in a bar? Can I drink? Can I go down to a bank and carry?' ... Whether we go permitless or we don't, where's the education?"

Equally disregarded were the people running some of Idaho's largest police departments, such as Boise Police Chief Bill Bones, Meridian Chief Jeff Lavey and Garden City Chief Rick Allen.

The only voice that counted was the gun lobby.

Before they relinquished control over who can carry a concealed weapon, Idaho lawmakers expanded where people could carry their firearms. A few years back, the gun lobby drowned out the urgent pleas of cops, college presidents, students, faculty and the State Board of Education and armed the campuses of Idaho public universities and state college.

And whose interests are these politicians serving?

Not public safety.

Crime in the United States has been falling ever since the crack cocaine epidemic spiked in the early 1990s. Violent crime rates are now half what they were 25 years ago. Rape and sexual assault rates have dropped even more.

You wouldn't know it, judging from the content of television news and the rhetoric of the survivalist movement.

Mass shootings and terrorism draw the media's attention, but your odds of being shot by a pistol in the hands of someone you know are far greater. Of the 8,000 people killed with a gun in 2014, 3 percent were shot with a rifle.

An armed citizenry is not necessarily a safer citizenry.

Take a look at the FBI's 2014 survey of what it called 160 "active shooter" incidents. From 2000 to 2013, it found just one case where an armed civilian who was not a security guard subdued an armed assailant.

On the other hand, it found 22 unarmed people who stopped an armed intruder.

So much for "a good guy with a gun" stopping "a bad guy with a gun."

The conceal carry movement, in fact, may be making us less secure. Looking over records from 1979 to 2010, Stanford law professor John J. Donohue III linked these laws to "substantially higher rates" of violent crime.

These are among the nuggets Evan Osnos describes in his New Yorker magazine article, "Making a Killing."

If it's not your personal safety that's driving this agenda, what's left?

The gun manufacturer's marketing plan.

Because at the genesis of the concealed carry movement, America's gunmakers were facing a death spiral.

They make a product that doesn't wear out or grow obsolete.

The number of hunters - their traditional customers - was shrinking.

And European competitors such as Glock were selling more of their products to law enforcement and the military.

Persuading ordinary people that they had need for a small handgun propped up the entire industry. Says Osnos: Manufactures of .380-caliber guns moved 900,000 items in 2014 - a record and 20 times more than were sold in 2001.

In fact, the National Rifle Association, which receives much of its money from gun manufacturers, long ago left behind the hunting community. Many of the NRA's "self-defense and tactical" members deride hunters as "Fudds" - as in Elmer.

That sort of puts what the NRA and Gary Pruet's Idaho Second Amendment Alliance are doing in a new light, doesn't it? Whether it makes you safer or not, it puts more coins in their pockets.

In some circles, you would call that following a profit motive. But whatever interests they're serving here, they aren't necessarily yours. - M.T.