

# **A politician's privilege becomes every citizen's right**

**Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune**

Allowing Idahoans to roam around carrying concealed weapons as a right of adulthood is a bad idea.

Why would you allow any novice to pack heat?

At least requiring someone to get a permit means he will get eight hours of classroom training.

Why would you not screen out applicants with a record of mental illness, a domestic violence conviction, a dishonorable military discharge and virtually any felony conviction. At least today, sheriffs conduct background checks.

And why would you force cops to fly blind - either at a traffic stop or when encountering a suspect? As of now, they know who has a permit and who does not.

But the Idaho House State Affairs Committee last week voted along party lines - Republicans for, Democrats against - to consider putting an end to Idaho's basic concealed weapons permit.

If adopted, House Bill 89 would leave in place the state's enhanced conceal carry permit - which in addition to classroom training and a background check requires applicants to fire 98 rounds. An enhanced permit is recognized in 37 other states and allows an individual to carry a concealed weapon on Idaho's public college and university campuses.

You can't blame the National Rifle Association for this one. The authors of Idaho's guns on campus bill have been silent.

Nor can you really get all that perturbed at the chief architect, Idaho Second Amendment Alliance President Greg Pruett.

Lawmakers had a chance to stop this idea but they put narrow self-interest ahead of public safety.

About this time last year, the public learned everyone in this state needs a conceal carry permit - everyone, that is, except the political elites.

Ada County Sheriff Gary Raney had gone over then Rep. Mark Patterson's concealed weapon permit request and uncovered Patterson had lied. Because Patterson had not disclosed his withheld judgment in a 1974 Florida rape case and an acquittal at trial in a 1977 Ohio rape case, Raney rejected Patterson's application.

It didn't matter. Under a 1909 Idaho law, more than 3,000 elected Idaho officials are free to carry concealed weapons without a permit.

So at the NRA's urging, the Idaho House moved to strike that exemption. It was far from a perfect bill, but only five House members voted no.

Then it got to the Senate State Affairs Committee, where former state Sen. Russ Fulcher, R-Meridian, eviscerated it. At the time, Fulcher was challenging Idaho Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter in the GOP primary election.

"This was put in statute for a reason," Fulcher said. "I believe it was for a good reason. We do not need to relinquish our privileges."

His fellow senators found that argument persuasive and killed the bill.

Idahoans are a funny lot. But right, left or indifferent, they agree on one thing: The fellow at the bottom of the pecking order has the same Second Amendment rights as the guy on the top.

The First Amendment gives no politician a greater claim to more free speech or religious liberty than his fellow citizens.

Protections against unreasonable search and seizure, self-incrimination and cruel and unusual punishment under the Bill of Rights apply equally. Nobody gets more due process because he's an elected official.

So legislators who stood on privilege a year ago are going to have a difficult time explaining why anyone else has to get a concealed weapons permit.

And for that, you can thank former Sen. Fulcher. - M.T.