

From the Sheriff:

Many of asked what my position is with as it relates to AB 763 and SB 403 the Carrying Concealed Weapons legislation. As many of you know this is a very controversial topic with many people on each side of the fence, as well as a few still riding the fence.

As the Sheriff, I am more encouraged with this years legislation verses the effort two years ago. The last effort would have required the Sheriff to conduct the backgrounds and issue the permit. This effort would have exposed the county taxpayers to potential civil litigation should a permit holder harm another due to our issuance of the permit. The County would have received \$75.00 to offset the costs which we figured would have amounted to a couple hundred dollars. At that time I spoke publicly that I was not against the concept of concealed carry but had serious reservations regarding the fine print and the under funded mandate of issuance.

So here we are in 2005 and the Senate has passed a new version that would require the Dept. of Justice to issue the permits. A great idea! However, just when I thought our elected officials started putting together a palatable piece of legislation, they have again added and amended it to ensure law enforcement opposition. Law enforcement asked that the list of permit holders be an open record, this would bring validity to the system of issuance. That failed. What they did provide law enforcement is the opportunity to search the data base during traffic stops only to see if the driver may be a permit holder. This is a great safety net for both the driver and the officer. That passed but with a very strict and tremendously silly amendment. The amendment will ONLY allow law enforcement to check during a legitimate traffic stop and not for domestic abuse calls, rapes, mental health calls, or even burglaries.

Our elected officials also stepped over the edge when they threw in another amendment that would expose a law enforcement officer, if, in the course of his/her duty, to be charged with a CRIME should they use the access for anything but a legitimate traffic stop. Other provisions allow citizens to get permit three-years after they are released from a mental institute or drug rehab. They have also failed to implement an absolute sobriety provision to ensure those carrying are not drinking. We know alcohol and firearms is a bad recipe which can lead to disaster. Permit holders would be allowed to have a blood alcohol concentration up to .079 without being in violation.

My question must be Why can't our elected officials pass something that is bi-partisan and reasonable. Why can't we pass legislation in a form that protects the greater majority of citizens and law enforcement alike? Of course that would require our elected officials to contact their local law enforcement managers and get their opinions. The current legislation is fundamentally flawed!

I would support the proper CCW legislation. What we need is a realistic form of legislation that eliminates the stupid amendments that hamstringing law enforcement and benefit the minority. Scenario A woman calls 911 because she is being beaten by her husband. While deputies respond, another deputy accesses the system to determine if the husband is a permit holder. He finds out he is, informs responding deputies of this for officer safety reasons. That deputy just committed a Class C Misdemeanor and will be jailed. Great legislation gang, keep up the good work! Thanks for listening, tnehl@co.dodge.wi.us.