

Orange Beach Should Ban Open & Concealed Carry at all City Facilities

800 words

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Shootings happen every day in America. I argue for a common-sense approach at municipal facilities, respecting our After-School Programs like Camp Sunshine and Expect Excellence. Columbine, Sandy Hook and Parkland are still fresh in our minds, banning open and concealed carry at city facilities makes sense, lowering the level of fear for adults and children inside.

The Second Amendment gives American citizens the right to bear arms. "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed," according to a report on The Cornell Law School web site (https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/second_amendment).

I agree with the Second Amendment, but I must ask in today's world is a lone shooter a "well-regulated Militia"? Of course, he or she is not, especially in government buildings.

"Generally, federal law prohibits a person from knowingly possessing or attempting to possess a firearm in a federal facility," according to a report on Gifford's Law Center web site (<https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/guns-in-public/location-restrictions/>).

Several years ago, a man committed suicide outside of Community Development. He ended his life with a pistol in the front seat of his car, parked in the first space next to the front door. Could he have come into the office and opened fire on the city employees who refused his permit? Yes, he could have.

In response to this threat management authorized construction of a bullet-proof podium in the Council Chambers at City Hall, giving the elected officials a place to duck down in the event a shooter opens fire during a council meeting.

Yet, the front-desk personnel at Community Development are still unprotected.

Open carry has strong support in Orange Beach.

"In my opinion Orange Beach should not ban concealed or open carry weapons in city buildings or facilities," said Tim Blackwell, former Planning Commissioner and current resident of Orange Beach in an email.

"I am a supporter of our 2nd amendment rights personally. I support the right to bear arms to protect my family and country," said four-term Orange Beach Council Member Jeff Silvers in an email.

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The city has no appetite for physically protecting facilities with TSA style security, arguing it costs too much, presenting an aura of suspicion when constituents pay sewer bills or apply for a business license. This is understandable.

An ordinance costs nothing, putting a sign at the entrance to each building, providing legal notice of the policy. It's simple, leave your guns locked in the car.

The consequences of not taking action can lead to public hysteria at events held on city property.

On Saturday morning, September 7, 2019, people at a Farmers Market in Old Town, Alexandria, Virginia feared for their lives as open-carry protesters (five men), brandishing fully-loaded assault rifles and pistols, walked through the market spreading fear by their presence, according to a report in Blue Virginia (<https://bluevirginia.us/2019/09/old-town-alexandria-incident-highlights-why-open-carry-laws-in-virginia-must-be-repealed>).

Families ran not wanting to be the next headline on Fox News.

To better prepare our community the Orange Beach Fire Department holds Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response (ASHER) classes, said Assistant Chief for Training Kevin Lanford in an email.

An Ordinance banning firearms at city facilities is not without its obstacles.

"The 'Dillon Rule' from 1868 prohibits local jurisdictions from adopting laws that are not specifically permitted in the state. This has prevented communities like Falls Church (Virginia) from preventing people from walking the streets or entering businesses with loaded guns," according to a report in Blue Virginia (<https://bluevirginia.us/2019/09/old-town-alexandria-incident-highlights-why-open-carry-laws-in-virginia-must-be-repealed>).

Open and concealed carry are not synonymous with municipal life in a vacation town espousing family values like Orange Beach. This city is branded on every street corner and brochure as family friendly, catering to tourists from around the world. Allowing citizens to carry open or concealed weapons into city facilities like the Event Center, the Art Center, or the Recreation Center is reckless.

The city was able to ban short term rentals, citing Mayor Tony Kennon's desire to know who his neighbors are. Perhaps banning open and concealed carry at city facilities is easy, pro-actively creating a: Guns-Free Zone, protecting the same neighbors from harm.

ENDS.

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