

# State of Kansas



## Office of the Senate Majority Leader

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Chairman Brunk and Members of the Committee:

It is a great honor and privilege to stand before you today in the strongest possible support of Senate Bill 45. As the bill's chief sponsor, I am proud to say that upon introduction I was joined by 25 Senate co-sponsors representing all corners of the state and both major political parties. After deliberation the legislation was approved by a strong bi-partisan margin of 31-7 in the Kansas Senate.

Mr. Chairman, while the amount of support for this measure is remarkable, it certainly not unprecedented. Over the last several years, members of the Kansas Legislature have come together in a bi-partisan manner to craft legislation that protects the rights of Kansans to exercise their rights under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment of the United States' Constitution. These proposals were crafted in order to give law abiding citizens the ability to defend themselves and their families from those who disregard our system of laws.

Senate Bill 45 is a common sense measure that builds upon the good work the legislature accomplished in past years. Currently, in the state of Kansas, it is lawful for a law abiding citizen to carry a firearm, without a permit, in the open or unconcealed anywhere except for areas that have been exempted via statute. Therefore, it makes sense that a law abiding citizen should have the freedom to carry a firearm under their clothing or in their purse if they so choose without undergoing the permitting process.

In addition to the practical application of this legislation, there is a principle that should not go undiscussed. With the "right to keep and bear arms" enshrined in both our state and federal constitutions, it is pretty clear that Kansans should not be required to get permission to exercise their freedoms. Not to belabor the point but our constitutions

clearly state “the right to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed,” not “the right to keep and bear arms with a government approved license shall not be infringed.” This is not to say I am opposed to the permitting process altogether. I proudly voted for the legislation instituting concealed carry permits, and this legislation does not eliminate permits altogether. As constitutional office holders, we should assume Kansans have right to defend themselves and their families.

Now, there are some that believe Kansas should not become the 7<sup>th</sup> State to grant its citizens some form of “Constitutional Carry”. While not representing the mainstream views of Kansans, they argue that our state should not move forward with the progress we have made in the areas of personal safety and personal liberty. They believe there will be chaos in our streets and a return to the “Wild West.”

Looking back on when the Personal and Family Protection Act became law in 2006, which instituted the current concealed carry permitting process, there were a number of naysayers also foretelling of increased violence and chaos in our streets. It is also worth noting that when then-Governor Kathleen Sebelius first vetoed the concealed carry legislation, she espoused similar beliefs by stating the proposal would “undermine the safety and freedom of all Kansans”. In the end a coalition of Republicans and Democrats came together to override her veto with the required two-thirds majorities in each chamber.

Almost eight years later, the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Uniform Crime Report has shown the propensity of violent crimes have decreased in our state, not increased. In fact, despite the growth in our state’s population over the last eight years, our violent and property crime rates have dropped by close to 30%. Studies of other states that have approved concealed carry also show similar results. Without question, the naysayers have been proven wrong.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I believe Kansans will continue to prove the naysayers wrong. With that I ask for the committee’s support for Senate Bill 45 and will stand for questions at the appropriate time.

-Terry Bruce