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As the Sheriff of Reno County Kansas, I am opposed to the concealed carry legislation, SB45, that has recently passed the Kansas Senate, and has been passed on to the House of Representatives. Safety of the public is my main responsibility along with protecting the rights of its citizens. Let me point out that I personally support the public having the right to carry concealed weapons as outlined in our current law. Under the current concealed weapons statute, a person that can legally get a concealed carry permit, must first take a course of instruction. Although the actual firearms course is not that difficult to pass, you must at least show that you have a working knowledge of the weapon and have some proficiency with it. This little range time at least gives the individual a sense of where their shooting ability is and hopefully makes them understand that they need to continue to go back to the range to improve their shooting skills. They will also learn the best way to carry a concealed weapon, suggestions on the best types of holsters and possibly even some tactical shooting (depending on their instructor).

As important as the shooting proficiency is, that is only part of the training an individual receives. The permit applicant also goes through training on when the weapon can be used and the liability of pulling the trigger. They learn that when that trigger is pulled and that bullet leaves the barrel, there is no calling it back. That is a big reality check when you are used to saying "I'm sorry", and that makes everything alright.

Another important aspect of the training is what to do if you are ever approached by law enforcement. A citizen with good intentions may be holding a suspect at gunpoint, not realizing that responding officers received a call of "a man with a gun". As officers arrive and instruct the individual to "drop the gun", the citizen wants to explain that he is helping, but in doing so, turns towards the officer, gun in hand. No law enforcement officer ever wants to have to take a life, but in circumstances such as this, I can see it happening.

The law that has passed the Kansas Senate and been sent to the House, allows any person that can legally possess a firearm, to carry a concealed weapon **without any training**. We may have, well meaning, people go out and purchase a handgun with the intent of going to the range and putting some rounds through it. Then all of a sudden they get busy and that trip to the range never happens. The only way to get better with a firearm is by getting the **proper instruction** and **practice to build the muscle memory**.

Without the training on the legal and liability issues of drawing and firing a firearm, we are setting the public up to become victims. Not only victims of a miss-use of force, but also the “victim” who becomes a suspect after pulling the trigger and taking a life, unlawfully, due to lack of training.

Some people will say that this proposed concealed carry law, is no different than the open carry law, which currently requires no training. I feel anyone carrying a firearm should be required to show proficiency and be trained much like they are for driving a car. Also, If I am walking down the sidewalk with my grandkids and see an individual with a gun on his hip, I can cross the street to get some distance between us. I can't do that if I can't see the gun. Many people utilizing the open carry don't realize they are probably the first target for someone wanting to do harm, simply because they are the biggest threat to the bad guy. That is why law enforcement is trained to be ever vigilant in their surroundings.

Proper training builds proficiency and is the key to proper firearms safety. Please don't take the training aspect out of the concealed carry law.

Randy Henderson
Sheriff, Reno County KS