



Written by [James Murphy](#) on April 1, 2020

## North Carolina Sheriff Ordered to Resume Processing Pistol Permits

A North Carolina judge has ordered a sheriff who suspended the issuing of pistol permits in his county to resume issuing them within a week. Wake County Sheriff Gerald Baker temporarily [suspended](#) the issuing of permits on March 24 after an unprecedented amount of applications caused the office to be overwhelmed with as many as 50 people gathering in the sheriff's office.



Superior Court Judge A. Graham Shirley issued the order in response to a lawsuit brought by [Grass Roots North Carolina](#) (GRNC), whose members include the Second Amendment Foundation and the Firearms Policy Coalition. Shirley also ordered a modification of the permitting process to minimize the amount of permit seekers in the justice office at one time.

The court order seemed to understand Baker's reasoning behind the suspension, but ultimately did not agree with it. "Baker's decision to temporarily suspend acceptance of applications was due to his efforts to comply with proclamations of emergency restrictions and his paramount and legitimate concern for the public health and safety in light of the existing declared states of emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak."

Baker seemed pleased with the court's order and reiterated that the suspension was never about gun rights, but public safety.

"I'm very pleased with Judge Shirley's ruling," Baker said. "I believe the court's review of the entire situation reveals that my primary purpose has always been, and will continue to be, to protect the safety and welfare of my staff, Wake County citizens and the jail residents housed in the Wake County Public Safety Center."

At the time of the suspension, Baker defended it as necessary due to the coronavirus. "We have to limit folks coming in contact with each other," the sheriff said. "It was also a health concern for our staff."

The vast number of people attempting to gain pistol permits, concealed-carry permits, and renewals of permits put the department at odds with county emergency guidelines for limiting person-to-person exposure during the coronavirus pandemic. Baker noted that the department had a backlog of 755 permit applications and that it was unable to keep up with demand.

Under North Carolina law, a sheriff has the power to restrict pistol permits in certain situations but he does not have the authority to issue a blanket suspension. Prior to Tuesday's ruling, Baker had also



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faced pressure from GOP lawmakers in the state.

State senators Warren Daniel and Danny Britt, both Republicans, called for Baker to rescind the suspension immediately.

“State law requires sheriffs to approve or reject a pistol permit within 14 days,” they wrote. “People are already suspicious and on edge. It’s reckless and illegal to suspend their Second Amendment rights just when they need assurance that they can trust the government.”

While this situation seems to have turned out well in North Carolina, it’s not the only place where the Second Amendment is playing second fiddle to the coronavirus. Several Pennsylvania counties have either closed gun permitting offices or have scaled back services. In Colorado, [Jefferson County](#) has suspended all concealed handgun permitting. Belmont County in Ohio has suspended all concealed-carry appointments and background checks until further notice. In Florida, the permitting system is also experiencing delays.

And, of course, Los Angeles County attempted to [close all gun stores](#) during the pandemic, only to be overruled by the county’s lawyer.

As the coronavirus attacks immune systems, so state and local governments are using the virus to attack our liberties. It should make us extremely uneasy to see just how quickly governments — who allegedly follow the U.S. Constitution — fall into an authoritarian mode in a crisis.

*Image: SolidMaks via iStock / Getty Images Plus*

*James Murphy is a freelance journalist who writes on a variety of subjects, with a primary focus on the ongoing anthropogenic climate-change hoax and cultural issues. He can be reached at [jcmurphyABR@mail.com](mailto:jcmurphyABR@mail.com)*



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