



Another Second Amendment Victory, This Time in Tennessee

When Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam (shown) was mayor of Knoxville in 2009, he supported gun restrictions in city parks, but since then he has had a change of heart. On Friday he [signed into law](#) a bill that invalidated an older law prohibiting gun owners with permits from carrying concealed in parks across the state.



Haslam is a living, breathing example of former Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen's famous dictum: "When I feel the heat, I see the light."

It was hoped that the legislature would have the bill ready for him to sign before the National Rifle Association's national convention began in Nashville two weeks ago, but last-minute wrangling and compromises delayed it.

The bill invalidates an earlier law that allowed local city and county governments to prohibit a concealed carry permit holder from carrying in a public park that is owned, operated, or used by that local government.

The new law upset not only mayors of Memphis, Chattanooga, and Nashville who opposed the measure, but also numerous gun control groups who failed to derail the measure. Nashville's Mayor Karl Dean declared, "I am opposed to the bill, opposed to having guns in parks ... [but] we'll have to follow the law."

Of course there have always been guns in parks. It's just a matter of who has them. The bill, HB 995, now allows lawful owners to carry, leveling the playing field against criminals, who have always carried.

Kathleen Wright, a spokeswoman for the Tennessee chapter of the anti-gun Moms Demand Action, got it backwards:

Moms across the state drew a line in the sandbox and urged legislators and Gov. Haslam to reject this dangerous bill, and now parents will be left wondering whether the person standing next to their child on the swing set is carrying a concealed, loaded weapon.

Up until Friday (the law became effective immediately) what Wright needed most to worry about was *criminals* carrying illegally, as they are the ones most likely to present a risk to kids on swingsets. What she and her moms should have been most concerned about was not being able to defend themselves against criminals potentially threatening their kids. She need not worry about those who have gone to the trouble of applying for a permit, taking a class on gun safety, paying a fee, and accepting the responsibility of carrying concealed.

Naturally, the NRA was quick not only to praise Haslam and the Tennessee legislature for applying the heat so that Haslam would see the light, but to take credit for the passage of the measure: "On behalf of the NRA's five million members, we want to thank [State] Senator John Stevens, along with [State]



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on April 27, 2015

Representatives Mike Harrison and Tilman Goins for their leadership in this effort.”

The compromise that allowed the bill to come to Haslam’s desk continues to allow the state capitol’s grounds to remain a “gun free” zone, and signs informing the public that guns aren’t allowed in parks will remain in place. In addition, anyone carrying in the “immediate vicinity” of a school-sanctioned event at a park will be asked to leave. “Immediate vicinity” wasn’t defined in the bill which, said Haslam, will “challenge” some local officials with just how to enforce it.

This brings Tennessee into line with federal laws that have allowed those with permits to carry in national parks since February 2010. And it is one more example of the momentum behind the expansion of rights guaranteed under the Second Amendment that caused at least one Tennessee politician to see the light after feeling the heat.

Photo of Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam: AP Images

A graduate of an Ivy League school and a former investment advisor, Bob is a regular contributor to The New American magazine and blogs frequently at www.LightFromTheRight.com, primarily on economics and politics.

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