

## Florida Permits Carrying Guns in Church

The ABC affiliate based in Tallahassee, Florida, reported on June 30 about a new law in the state that will allow residents with concealed-carry permits to carry their guns at churches or any other religious institutions that share properties with schools. ABC7 reported that state law already permitted people to carry concealed handguns at churches and other religious institutions, but that it excluded sites that shared property with a school. The bill was sponsored by Republican State Senator Joe Gruters, who told ABC7, “There are always threats.... And all we’re doing is giving them, those religious institutions, the ability and the right to be able to say ‘yes,’ if we choose. We’re going to allow concealed permit holders — it’s not the wild, wild West — we’re giving one of the safest subgroups in our society the ability to carry.”

The bill, popularly referred to as “Church Carry,” had long been sought by gun-rights activists, but it wasn’t until recently that it had enough votes to pass. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, a supporter of the legislation, quickly signed the bill into law, which changed the prior restriction on concealed carrying on church grounds with adjacent schools. While this bill does get Governor DeSantis’ name in the national news and elevate his profile at a time when political observers believe he may be planning a 2024 presidential run, some Second Amendment supporters feel that this measure isn’t enough. Matt Collins, director of legislation for Florida Gun Rights, told WFLA.com that while the move was a step in the right direction, gun-rights activists really want permitless carry, also known as “constitutional carry,” to be legalized in the state. Collins told WFLA.com, “Constitutional Carry is the law in 21 other states but where does Governor Ron DeSantis stand on this critical issue? So far he has been silent.”

## Father Shoots “Peeping Tom”

ABC13 KTRK-TV reported out of Harris County, Texas, on June 28 about a shoot-

ing that showed the lengths to which a mother and father will go in order to protect their child. According to Harris County police deputies, the mother and father were awakened in the middle of the night by the sounds of their young daughter screaming. The husband and wife quickly armed themselves and ran to the girl’s bedroom, and discovered a man looking into their daughter’s window. The parents were also horrified to see that the deranged man was inappropriately touching himself while watching the young girl. The mother and father went outside the house to confront the man and told him to lie down on the ground, but he fled to a nearby gas station. In a move that many might criticize as overreaching, the armed couple followed the man and tried detaining him for police. It was at that moment that the suspect wrestled the wife’s handgun from her and aimed it at her. The husband, fearing the suspect would now shoot his wife, fired his own gun at the now-armed “peeping Tom,” hitting him repeatedly. The wounded suspect was transported to a nearby medical facility for treatment and is expected to survive his injuries. Law enforcement said the incident has been referred to the Harris County District Attorney’s Office for a grand-jury review. The father told police that the reason he and his wife were so prepared was because his daughter had complained of a perverted peeping tom watching her during the night in the past. The parents had never seen anyone before, but wanted to be prepared this time.

## 2020 a Record Year for Gun Sales

*The Reload* podcast reported on June 29 about how surging gun sales in the past year produced a boom in the gun industry. *The Reload* reported that Smith & Wesson “reported its best sales year ever in 2020, topping \$1.1 billion in net sales for the first time ever. That’s up more than 100 percent from 2019.”

*The Reload* included statements made by Smith & Wesson CEO Mark Smith on

a recent earnings call in which he said, “Our manufacturing logistics teams produced and shipped nearly 2.5 million units last fiscal year, representing a 70 percent increase year on year.”

The podcast explained the 2020 gun-buying boom was mostly due to the unrest created by the lockdowns and the Black Lives Matter riots, which led to large numbers of people, many of them first-time gun owners, going on a gun-and-ammo-buying frenzy. *The Reload* further explained, “The deluge of new owners has exceeded the industry’s ability to produce new guns and, especially, ammo. Smith & Wesson reported having just one week’s worth of supply in distributor inventory during the earnings call.”

*The Reload* also mentioned how other gun companies experienced a surge in sales and that gunmaker “Ruger reported a nearly 50 percent jump in net sales during its first quarter of 2021, while top ammo makers Olin Company and Vista Outdoor have seen about a fourfold increase in their stock prices over the past year. The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF), which represents gun makers and dealers, said the entire industry is experiencing huge gains.”

Mark Oliva, an NSSF spokesperson, told *The Reload*, “I think every manufacturer right now is benefiting from this outsized level of demand that we’re witnessing.... We are in a period of unprecedented demand. That’s undeniable.”

*The Reload* added that sales don’t seem to show signs of slowing down, as “citizens bought up more than 1.3 million guns in May 2021, second only to the previous May. More than 8.5 million guns have been sold so far this year, which is about 400,000 more than during the same period in 2020.” And now with threats of new gun control being pushed by the Biden administration, the gun industry is expecting sales to continue to be strong for a while.

“We’re keeping pace with what we saw last year, and there are no indications, at this point, that demand is going to drop off precipitously,” Oliva told *The Reload*. ■

— PATRICK KREY