

Why Open Carry?

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As the open carry community in Michigan grows, more people in the public have become 'aware' of gun owners. Some are not bothered by the law abiding citizens that open carry, whereas others are fearful. This essay will cover some of the most popular arguments against open carry, will explain some of the reasons the community does so, and will explain why some prefer to openly carry their firearm instead of concealing it where applicable to those with a Concealed Pistol License.

Comfort

Carrying a firearm in general can be a burden. Ask anyone who carries one daily. The two most carried firearms are large framed firearms, such as the 1911 style .45 caliber handgun and various Glock models such as the Glock model 17 or Glock model 22. Having a larger frame typically results in more weight, especially in metal framed firearms such as the 1911. Though the Glock is polymer framed, the magazine is double stacked with rounds side by side or staggered which causes the firearm to be wider and thus more difficult to conceal. Many of those that open carry do so because it is simply more comfortable for them. Concealing such a large framed gun can be almost impossible at times, especially in the summer months when shorts and a T-shirt are of normal dress. There is nothing more difficult than attempting to conceal a full sized firearm with a 5" barrel when you aren't wearing clothing that will naturally do so.

Draw Speed

The open carry of a firearm in a vast majority of situations allows for a quicker draw of the firearm when needed versus concealed carry. If the use of deadly force is imminent and cannot be avoided for the defense of yourself, your family, or another, the ability to access said firearm must be quick. There is no bad guy on the planet that is going to wait for you to draw and your gun so you can send him on his way to the emergency room. Drawing openly from the hip ensures the following: First that you will save seconds, or even fractions of a second when drawing your firearm because you do not have to move your shirt, or open your vest, or suddenly reach in your pocket or bend down and grab your ankle. Your firearm can snag on a pants pocket, on your shirt, etc. All of these things waste time, and when seconds count and your life is on the line, no one will be waiting for you. Wasting precious seconds could mean the difference between life and death.

Deterrent

To say that open carry deters crime is simply a 'no-brainer'. There has been national news stories in which open carry has clearly deterred crime. Not long ago in Georgia multiple men planned on robbing a Waffle House. As the others waited in the car, they sent a scout in to survey the place. As the scout walked in, the police noticed the remaining men in the car looking suspicious but continued to watch. The scout walked into the Waffle House, noticed two men open carrying their firearms and quickly ran out of the place to tell his friends that the deal was off. Upon doing so, the police that were watching said men decided that they had enough reasonable suspicion against the crooks and all of them went to jail. Needless to say, if it weren't for open carry, even if the police were watching carefully, lives could have been lost. It is always better to

completely deter crime from happening than to have to defend yourself and possibly injure or kill someone no matter how deserving it may be. This also will likely cause a very expensive legal battle if you must defend yourself, and simply avoiding the situation all together and yet refusing to become a victim in the process is clearly the best option. If still not convinced that open carry deters crime, ask yourself this question: Why do police and security guards open carry if not for a direct deterrent to crime? Very few people will commit crime in front of said Law Enforcement Officials. It isn't necessarily their power of authority that is a deterrent however. Any civilian can do a citizen's arrest when a felony is committed; one does not need to be a member of Law Enforcement to do so. Criminals know that if they commit that crime and put other people's lives in jeopardy, it's the almighty gun that's going to give them a bad day, not the handcuffs.

Political Statement and Exercising of Rights

There are some open carry simply for the sake of exercising their right to do so. One may argue that simply because you can, doesn't mean you should. This may be true in some aspect, but on the other side of the coin, a right unexercised is a right lost. The fact that someone has a gun on their hip does not make them a raging lunatic. To some, open carry is simply a political statement saying that they are proud to live in a nation that allows their citizens the right to keep and bear arms. At an open carry picnic in Marysville in which the Canadian border could be easily seen, some open carriers stated they were proud to be American, because not less than a mile away, our Canadian neighbors are not even allowed to own a pistol of any kind. Between 25-30% of Americans own a firearm in our nation. These people are your family, your friends and your neighbors. As firearm awareness increases, and with the news media constantly reporting more heinous crimes daily, more and more Americans are deciding that it is time to take a stand for the safety of themselves and others. In times of economic crisis, where cities cannot afford to keep police forces at full capacity, more Americans are finding out that the responsible citizen does not wait sometimes hours for police protection in a time of need, but instead refuse to be a victim and have decided to take matters into their own hands if the occasion arises.

Common Arguments against Open Carry

If you open carry, you'll be shot first

While this could in fact be true in some circumstances, consider this. If someone is hell-bent in committing their crime, they are going to do so regardless of the presence of a firearm. The situation can either go as follows: One, a scout or lone criminal can come to commit their crime, realize that someone has a firearm, and call off the whole gig completely, deterring them from the scene. Two, the criminal simply barges in and attacks blindly without any consideration whatsoever to their surroundings. At this point, it does not matter if the firearm is concealed or open, as the criminal has already made up their mind as to what they plan on doing, and is probably completely unaware of the firearm on someone's hip. The last situation would be that someone scouted out and planned their attack ahead of time, and they do target you first. There is no way in knowing whether or not you would have been targeted first anyway; a bank robber intent on killing everyone in a bank who happens to be full of women with the exception of one man is obviously going to kill the greatest threat first, which perceived by most is going to be the male. This man would have been killed first because he is male, not because he is carrying a firearm. There is no evidence to support the fallacy that open carriers get shot first.

I want the element of surprise

The element of surprise is an offensive tactic. Being that the only lawful use of a firearm is for the defense of yourself or someone else, it makes no sense to respond to an offensive tactic with an offensive tactic. The act of drawing to defend yourself is a defensive tactic. If a criminal has a gun pulled on you and you feel you can successfully pull your gun on them and defend yourself without getting yourself killed in the process, then the criminal has already made up their mind on what they want to do, and at the point of drawing and shooting, there's no amount of surprise that's going to change his mind in the future. He's made up his mind, you've made up yours, and the end result is going to be someone going to the emergency room. The element of surprise plays absolutely no role whatsoever in this defensive situation, as any hesitation in waiting for a criminals response to your gun could end your own life. Very rarely could surprise turn the tides in your favor unless the criminal has a significantly poor sense of situational awareness. The majority of concealed carried handguns are more slowly drawn than those that are openly carried. When you need your gun, no criminal is going to wait for you to pull it on them and fill them with lead.

I don't want to be hassled by police

As the open carry community grows, so does the amount of police education provided. More and more people in the Law Enforcement community are becoming aware and even supportive of citizens rights to openly carry a firearm. Many police realize that because more crime is being deterred, it allows them to have more time to devote to where they can quickly and more effectively respond to crimes that would otherwise not be deterred by a civilian. Police are also beginning to realize that felons who cannot legally own a firearm or are carrying for unlawful intent are not going to attract attention to themselves by carrying their firearm in the open.

I don't want to scare people

With 25-30% of Americans owning guns, that gives the United States a nearly one in three ratio of those that own guns. Take the number of those Americans that don't own firearms but are supportive of the second amendment, and you could have nearly half the population. Those that fear firearms are those that are typically uneducated about them. Only in Hollywood will you see guns simply go off on their own and Wild West shootings. There is absolutely no reason anyone should fear a law abiding citizen who is going out and living their daily lives shopping at a grocery store or purchasing a coffee at the local coffee shop with a gun on their hip. The vast majority of gun owners are in fact law abiding citizens who go through their daily lives attempting to stay out of trouble and live 'good' lives. Remember, everyone in the state of Michigan must pass a criminal background check before purchasing a handgun. Therefore, one cannot have a criminal record to legally own or purchase a pistol of any sort. Those that commit violent crime are typically repeat offenders who have a previous record and cannot even possess a firearm lawfully anyway. There are 42 states in the United States that allow some form of lawful open carry by citizens. Multiply that number by the amount of people across the entire nation who open carry. Either we have an extremely fearful nation as a whole across those 42 states, or open carry simply does not bother people as much as you might think.

I'm still not convinced

Though this article may not convince you that open carry is the correct way to carry, or may not convince you to even support open carry, know that open carry isn't going away

anytime soon. The goal of this argument is not to convince the anti-gun person that it is acceptable to open carry, but rather to convince those that who may otherwise conceal to carry their gun openly from time to time and support and exercise your rights. One in twenty five people in the state of Michigan have a valid Concealed Pistol License, and though you do not need a CPL to open carry, if this article persuades even a handful of CPL holders to open carry, when they would otherwise be carrying anyway, then the job of this article is complete. The sooner awareness is spread, and the more visible guns there are deterring crime, the safer our state will become. Remember, a right unexercised is a right lost, and even if the act of open carry is not important to you, but the right to open carry is, consider giving it a try, if only once. You may find that it's not nearly as bad as you think it is, that people really aren't afraid of you like you thought they would be, and who knows, you may even deter a crime in the process.