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Assembly Committee on State Affairs
Chair Rob Swearingen
Room 123 West
State Capitol
PO Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708
Rep.Swearingen@legis.wisconsin.gov

January 7, 2026

Cc: Committee Clerk Zach.Schmidt
Zach.Schmidt@legis.wisconsin.gov

Re: AB609

Dear Chair Swearingen:

Please find below and enter into the record testimony by David Eiden, who is testifying in my stead on behalf of Wisconsin Gun Owners, Inc. (WGO) in the matter of Assembly Bill 609.

Best regards,

Corey Graff
Executive Director

Testimony on AB609—Constitutional Carry

Position: SUPPORT

Thank you, Chair, and members of the committee, for holding an important hearing on AB609. The members of Wisconsin Gun Owners, Inc. (WGO) support Assembly Bill 609 as proposed.

AB609 upgrades Wisconsin to the gold standard of Constitutional Carry (concealed weapon permits would be optional for reciprocity with other states for those who travel).

This is not a complicated issue to understand. Since WGO's founding in 2003, we have always maintained that concealed carry is a right, not a privilege. Constitutional Carry (permit-less concealed carry) would do away with the requirement to get a Big-Brother-May-I-Please permission slip to carry.

It would fully restore our right to bear arms, meaning Wisconsin would join 29 other states that respect citizens' right to bear arms ("bearing arms" means you have the arms on you when and where you please—our natural right to self-defense does not and should not begin and end, willy-nilly, where some government bureaucrat thinks it should).

Before Wisconsin passed its concealed weapons law, we were all forced to sit and listen to people with no firearms experience, no shooting expertise, and no peer-reviewed crime data to support their assertions claim that a concealed carry law would result in Wild West shootouts in the streets.

Such recycled and unfounded claims opposing AB609 should, likewise, be disregarded as nonsense.

WGO supports CCW reciprocity, so we're leaving the permit system in place as an option for those who wish to retain their CCW permit and enjoy the privileges of reciprocity with other states that honor Wisconsin's permit.

But the keyword there is "privilege." Gun owners see Constitutional Carry as a return to baseline, a complete restoration of their right to bear arms.

There are both good and bad aspects of Wisconsin's current concealed weapons permit system.

The good? More law-abiding armed citizens on our streets.

The bad? The Wisconsin Department of Justice manages the system and keeps a computerized list (database) of all permit holders, treating gun owners like common criminals.

The resulting bureaucracy and vested financial interests created by the current system's license fee and superfluous background check required to obtain a concealed weapons license are self-perpetuating and a massive waste of time, effort, energy, and resources.

The word "permit" implies permission; a concealed weapons permit is a government permission slip. Try to imagine the outrage in the streets that would (justifiably) erupt if the State required a permit to exercise free speech or practice the religion of your choice.

This matter is really that simple. As a result, gun owners have shown remarkable patience and restraint while having their right to bear arms first completely prohibited in 1871 by the State of Wisconsin, and then, later, by enduring a government permission slip.

Constitutional Carry represents a complete restoration of the inalienable right to bear arms, which is not only about individual self-defense but also as a check and balance against government tyranny; giving government the ability to regulate that check and balance destroys the check and balance.

AB609, as proposed, returns Wisconsin citizens' right to keep and bear arms to its rightful place as an inalienable right.

Thank you.

Submitted by David Eiden