

## In this American town, guns are required by law

By Omar Jimenez, CNN

Updated 2:22 PM EST, Wed March 7, 2018

🗨 Video Ad Feedback

01:10 - Source: [CNN](#)

This city requires residents to own a gun

**(CNN)** — As the debate over guns continues in Washington and in communities across the country, there’s at least one place where owning a gun is technically required by law.

In Kennesaw, Georgia, local law says that “every head of household residing in the city limits is required to maintain a firearm.”

"If you're going to commit a crime in Kennesaw and you're the criminal – are you going to take a chance that that homeowner is a law-abiding citizen?" asked Kennesaw Mayor Derek Easterling.

Wayne Arnold is one of those citizens. Among the weapons he keeps at home are an AR-15-style .223 caliber rifle, a variety of handguns and more.

"It gives me the ability to protect myself as opposed to being somewhere where you weren't allowed to have a firearm or it was frowned upon," said Arnold.

## **"More or less a political statement"**

It may be the law in Kennesaw to own a gun, but the police department says it isn't actually enforced.

Many locals CNN spoke to assumed that the law dated back to the town's founding, but it was actually only enacted in 1982. "It was meant to be kind of a crime deterrent," said Lt. Craig Graydon, who's been with the Kennesaw Police Department for over 30 years. "It was also more or less a political statement because the city of Morton Grove, Illinois, passed a city ordinance banning handguns from their city limits."

Back then, the town had a population of just a few thousand. Over three decades later, the law is still on the books.

Today, Kennesaw, a town of about 33,000 people, has had one murder in the last six years and a violent crime rate of below 2%.

But it's unclear whether that has anything to do with the gun law.

City officials say their relationship with the community is a key factor in maintaining public safety. "We can't say that just that gun law contributes x number of percent to why we have a low crime rate. It may be part of it, but it needs to be looked at from a whole picture," said Graydon. "Don't just look at the ordinance."

## **A small town that gets questions from around the country**

As communities across the country re-examine their own relationship with guns in the wake of recent mass shootings, officials say they have been getting calls from all over the country – and even as far away as Norway – inquiring about the town's gun law.

"We get a lot of calls, conversation, and it seems to keep crime control, gun safety, things like that on the minds of many of the residents, because people are constantly talking about the gun law," said Lt. Graydon. "So that's been somewhat of a benefit to us."

"The first thing that most people say when they meet us, you know as a community is 'oh, it's not what I expected,'" said Mayor Easterling. "I don't know what they expect of people who arm themselves with guns at home, or what they're looking for, but really we're not that."

"People kind of get the image that it's the Wild West, where everybody walks around with a firearm strapped to their side, and it's not like that," Arnold said. "It's strictly a home defense system type of deal. There's no shootouts down the street."

**Paid Links**

---

---

---

---

---

Search CNN...



Log In

Live TV

Audio

World

US Politics

Business

Health

Entertainment

Tech

Style

Travel

Sports

Videos

Features

Weather

More