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Project 2025 Would Increase Gun Violence, Reversing Historic Declines

The far right's new authoritarian playbook would invalidate state laws on concealed carry, making it so almost anyone can carry firearms in public—from Times Square to the National Mall.

AUTHOR

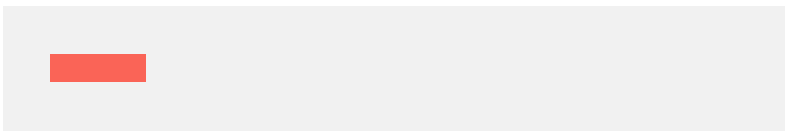


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Pistols are seen in custom-made holsters during a rally at the Texas State Capitol in Austin, Texas, on January 1, 2016. (Getty/Erich Schlegel)



This article is part of a series from the Center for American Progress exposing how the sweeping Project 2025 policy agenda would harm all Americans. This new authoritarian playbook, published by the Heritage Foundation, would destroy the 250-year-old system of checks and balances upon which U.S. democracy has relied and give far-right politicians, judges, and corporations more control over Americans' lives.

Gun violence is falling at a historic rate for the second year in a row after surging nearly 30 percent during former President Donald Trump's final year in office. However, rather than build on the success of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act by passing stronger gun laws and increasing investments in the root causes of violence, far-right extremists are attempting to defund federal law enforcement and invalidate state gun laws that save lives. Their radical policy agenda would make the country less safe by making it easier for people who want to commit violence to carry guns and harder for law enforcement to solve violent crimes.

Background

In its extremist *Mandate for Leadership*, dubbed "Project 2025: Presidential Transition Project," the far-right Heritage Foundation has outlined an extreme policy vision to put power—and profits—back in the hands of the corporate gun lobby at the expense of public safety. Among other radical proposals, this agenda calls for undermining the effectiveness of federal law enforcement and replacing experts tasked with protecting the American people with far-right loyalists who don't know how to keep our communities safe. In May 2024, Project 2025 had a booth at the annual National Rifle Association (NRA) convention, demonstrating its architects' commitment to prioritizing guns over people. Recently, Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts even made concerning references to armed political violence on Steve Bannon's podcast, saying: "[W]e are in the process of the second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be." In a post on X, the Heritage Foundation repeated Roberts' threat of a bloodless revolution.

Project 2025's plans to politicize law enforcement, end the independence of the U.S. Department of Justice, and move the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) from the FBI to the Treasury Department would undermine law enforcement efforts to reduce violent crime. Many of the dangerous ideas pushed by Project 2025 and the corporate gun lobby to prevent law enforcement from enforcing the laws on the books are already being championed by lawmakers.



[Project 2025's] plans to undermine local control and force a one-size-fits-all solution to public safety on every community have already manifested themselves in the RSC budget.

For instance, the latest Republican Study Committee (RSC) budget calls for eliminating vital tools used by law enforcement to reduce violence. This includes defunding "red flag" laws, which allow law enforcement to temporarily

remove firearms from someone who poses an imminent risk of harm to themselves or others, and destroying firearm records used by law enforcement to solve gun crimes. If enacted, these extreme policies would threaten every individual's right to feel safe and be free from gun violence.

In addition to impeding law enforcement efforts to hold shooters accountable, the right-wing policy agenda would defund proven crime prevention strategies. For example, the Heritage Foundation's recommendation to take billions of dollars out of the Crime Victims Fund, which addresses survivors' needs to heal and break the cycle of violence, subsequently made it into the RSC budget. The RSC budget also calls for eliminating Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funding that goes toward gun violence research and ending structural racism.

Project 2025's dangerous approach to public safety involves draconian control over local officials and consolidation of power in the presidency to enable a far-right administration to impose its vision of the law on the entire country. These plans to undermine local control and force a one-size-fits-all solution to public safety on every community have already manifested themselves in the RSC budget. One of the most extreme and dangerous of these policy proposals is the Concealed Carry Reciprocity (CCR) Act. This legislation would overrule state laws on carrying concealed guns, making it so almost anyone can carry firearms in public. By forcing states to recognize concealed carry laws from other states with weak or nonexistent standards, CCR would enable tourists with criminal histories to carry loaded and hidden firearms in busy places such as Times Square in New York, L.A. Live in Los Angeles, and the National Mall in Washington, D.C., no questions asked.

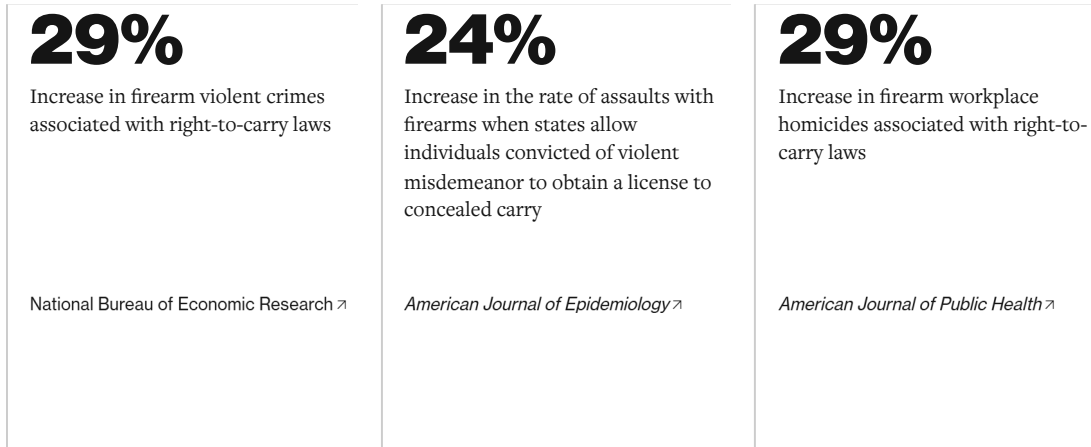
Concealed carry reciprocity is a race to the bottom for public safety

Forcing states to recognize the weakest concealed carry standards in the country violates states' rights and would lead to a race to the bottom for public safety. Twenty-nine states allow individuals to carry loaded, concealed handguns in public without first receiving any gun safety training, obtaining a license, or even undergoing a background check. These permitless carry states lack essential safety measures designed to ensure that individuals carrying handguns in public have been properly trained and vetted. As noted by a 2022 study from John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health: "Allowing more individuals to carry concealed guns in public—including some who would have previously been denied carry permits due to prior arrests or restraining orders—can increase inappropriate use of firearms in response to interpersonal conflicts, disputes, or other situations." Indeed, weakening requirements to carry a firearm is associated with increases in violent crime, firearm robberies, gun thefts, workplace homicides, and mass shootings.

Concealed carry requirements vary greatly in the remaining 21 states and the District of Columbia; this includes the minimum age required to obtain a license and which criminal convictions are disqualifying. CCR violates states' rights by forcing states to allow individuals from permitless carry states who may have violent criminal histories and zero gun safety training to carry concealed guns in public, even if they could not legally purchase a gun or obtain a carry permit in the state. Under CCR, if an individual were denied a concealed carry permit in their home state, they could obtain a permit in another state and their home state would be forced to recognize it.

Since states vary when it comes to views on firearms and public safety challenges, they should be the ones that decide who can carry firearms within their borders. A press release from U.S. Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC), following his introduction of CCR legislation, [quoted a Breitbart article](#) calling the policy “the greatest gun rights boost since the ratification of the Second Amendment in 1791.”

WEAKENING CONCEALED CARRY REQUIREMENTS INCREASES VIOLENT CRIME



This policy would make it harder for law enforcement to prevent violence and is opposed by leading law enforcement organizations

By making it easier for people who want to commit violence to carry firearms and making it virtually impossible for law enforcement to confirm if an individual is legally allowed to carry a gun, CCR would thwart law enforcement’s ability to keep our communities safe. For this reason, leading law enforcement organizations have opposed the legislation, including the [Major Cities Chiefs Association](#), [Fraternal Order of Police](#), and [International Association of Chiefs of Police](#).

Numerous studies have found that weakening concealed carry requirements firearms makes it harder for law enforcement to solve violent crimes:

- According to a [2022 study](#), right-to-carry laws are associated with a [13 percent decline](#) in the rates that police clear violent crime.
- A [2019 study](#) found that “[p]olice may be less enthusiastic about investigating certain suspicious activities or engaging in effective crime-fighting actions given the greater risks that widespread gun carrying poses to them, whether from permit holders or the criminals who steal their guns.”
- Relaxing restrictions on concealed carry in public increases officer-involved shootings: A [2022 study](#) found states that removed requirements to carry a concealed handgun experienced a [12.9 percent increase](#) in officer-involved shootings.

Conclusion

The Biden administration has done more to reduce gun violence than any administration in decades—signing the [Bipartisan Safer Communities Act](#), creating the first-ever [White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention](#), and proposing strong federal rules to [crack down on untraceable “ghost guns,”](#) [strengthen background checks,](#) and [increase compensation and support](#) for gun violence survivors. At a time of [historic declines in gun violence](#) across the country, these popular policies should be commended, and Congress should build on this success by passing other lifesaving laws, including banning assault weapons and requiring guns to be stored securely.

Reversing the Biden administration’s bipartisan accomplishments and making it easier for anyone to carry guns in sensitive public places would only make communities more dangerous. Project 2025 aims to weaken the rule of law and [weaponize criminal legal systems](#) in furtherance of extreme policies that will cost lives. By politicizing law enforcement and [eliminating the independence](#) of the U.S. Department of Justice and the FBI, Project 2025 would undermine efforts to prevent gun violence and hold people who commit violence accountable.



With the toll of gun violence already costing the United States an estimated \$557 billion and nearly 50,000 lives each year, we cannot afford to weaken concealed carry requirements.

Project 2025 and other recent right-wing publications, such as the RSC budget and [Republican Fiscal Year 2025 Bill](#), give a disturbing preview of a grim future in which the corporate gun lobby can rewrite U.S. laws with an emphasis on profits over people. Key themes in this authoritarian playbook include preventing federal law enforcement from enforcing the laws on the books, allowing the proliferation of [ghost guns](#), and defunding proven public safety solutions that prevent or respond to violent crime. The latest federal spending bill advanced by House Republicans proposes nearly \$1 billion in cuts to the U.S. Department of Justice’s budget, which would eliminate [thousands of law enforcement positions](#) and all funding for [community violence intervention programs](#).

If Congress enacts CCR, research strongly suggests that the United States will experience increases in violent crime, petty disputes escalating into shootings, and unsolved crimes. With the toll of gun violence already costing the United States an estimated [\\$557 billion](#) and [nearly 50,000 lives](#) each year, we cannot afford to weaken concealed carry requirements.

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