

October 19, 2004

Honorable John P. Murtha
PO Box 780
Johnstown, PA 15907-0780

Dear Congressman Murtha,

I am asking for your help with an important matter on behalf of the Johnstown Rifle and Pistol Club and all gun owners in the Commonwealth. Currently, Pennsylvania Code allows lawful carry of concealed firearms with a valid concealed carry permit. The only places specifically prohibited under state Code are courtrooms, prisons and schools. A Pennsylvania citizen should be able to assume that unless otherwise specifically prohibited by state Code they can exercise their Second Amendment rights within the Commonwealth.

The National Park Service currently prohibits citizens of the United States from possessing a firearm in any property that they administer under regulation 36CFR2.4. This prohibition, in our club's view, is immoral as it results in the assaults, rapes and deaths of citizens who visit National Parks. We also feel the prohibition is illegal, as it violates the letter and intent of the Bill of Rights.

Within our area we have several National Park sites: the Johnstown Flood National Memorial, Allegheny-Portage Railroad National Historic Site, Fort Necessity National Battlefield, Friendship Hill National Historic Site and, soon, The Flight 93 National Memorial.

The NPS regulation, thus, forces concealed carry permit holders to disassemble their firearms, render them inaccessible prior to entering these sites and to leave them in their vehicle risking possible theft. The gun owner, alternatively, is forced to leave the firearm at home if they choose to visit these sites. These are unacceptable alternatives.

Artificial geographic boundaries do not prevent criminals from perpetrating crimes. Basically, 36CFR2.4 creates gun-free victim zones literally just feet away from areas not regulated by this code

National Parks are the sites of over 4,400 serious crimes each year, including 10 murders, 132 rapes, 70 robberies, 3 kidnappings, 212 aggravated assaults, 488 burglaries, 3,277 larcenies and thefts, 130 motor vehicle thefts, and 104 arsons

My wife and I happened to be on Skyline Drive, in Virginia, a few years ago when a hiker was raped and murdered within a couple of miles of where we had just hiked. I am personally offended that I am literally risking my life when I go to these parks. It is simply unrealistic of the National Park Service to claim they can protect citizens within the vast wilderness or urban settings of many Parks.

The Johnstown Rifle and Pistol Club requests that you contact Secretary of The Interior Gayle Norton and ask her to amend 36CFR2.4. We are proposing an addition to the statute. Under “(a)(1) Except as otherwise provided,” we propose adding subparagraph 2.4(a)(2)(iv) to read:

(iv) Notwithstanding any other provision contained within this section, when carried within a motor vehicle or when carried concealed by a person who is licensed by the State to carry a concealed weapon, or by a resident of a state which has entered into a reciprocity agreement with the State and who has been issued a license to carry a concealed weapon by that state. The terms, conditions and limitations imposed by the issuing authority of the license shall apply with regard to the type of weapon that may be possessed.

Essentially, we are asking that the National Park Service firearms regulations simply comply with State Code regulating firearm possession since the parks reside within state boundaries. Citizens with concealed carry permits should be able to cross the street into National Park sites without forfeiting their Second Amendment right to self-protection

Thank you for your in interest and help with this important issue. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rick *****

Johnstown Rifle and Pistol Club