

FAUQUIER GRABS FOR GUNS



FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF PHOTO/RANDY LITZINGER

Brian Parrish, co-owner of Triune Shooting Sports in Warrenton, holds a rifle. Parrish said interest in concealed carry classes has spiked since recent gun control orders from the federal and state governments.

Fears of terrorists, regulations drive concealed gun permits

By Michael Melkonian
FAUQUIER TIMES STAFF WRITER

As advocates take aim at new federal and state gun regulations, year-end statistics show that following a significant spike in 2013, concealed carry permits and background checks for buying guns both in Virginia, and Fauquier County specifically, have slowly increased.

In Fauquier County in 2013, 1,530 people were granted concealed carry permits, about 600 more than the previous year, according to circuit court records. But the number fell to 1,138 in 2014.

In 2015, the Fauquier County Circuit Court granted 1,218 concealed weapons permits.

The statewide numbers mirror the trend:

In 2013, Virginia circuit courts issued 98,163 concealed handgun permits, a jump of almost 40,000 from 2012, according to the state police. Again, the number fell to 64,187 in 2014. In 2015, 64,639 concealed permits were issued in Virginia.

Overall, there are 421,824 active concealed carry permits in the state.

These state and county permits surged against a backdrop of mass shootings in late 2012 and 2013, when gunmen killed 27 at a school in Newtown, Conn., and 12 at the Navy Yard in Washington, D.C.

In 2015, as the media's attention turned to mass shootings around the country, Democratic politicians have issued a wave of new

Guns out of sight, close at hand

■ Fauquier permits issued for concealed handguns (source: *Fauquier County Circuit Court*):

2015: 1,218

2014: 1,138

2013: 1,530

2012: 958

■ Concealed carry permits issued in Virginia (source: *Virginia State Police*)

2015: 65,760

2014: 64,187

2013: 98,163

2012: 59,490

Total active resident permits in Virginia as of Jan. 4: 421,824

regulations that might set off a new surge in gun sales and permits.

President Barack Obama's recent executive order tightened background check rules nationwide while Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring announced in late December that the Commonwealth will stop recognizing concealed carry permits from 25 states.

Herring said the state will revoke reci-

procity agreements with the states because their concealed weapon laws don't meet Virginia's standards. The change goes into effect Feb. 1.

"I think it's an overstretch of the executive branch," said Brian Parrish, co-owner of Triune Shooting Sports in Warrenton. "To me it's a blatant slap in the face of gun owners and their rights."

Parrish is an NRA-certified instructor and teaches handgun safety courses that show an "applicant has demonstrated competence with a handgun" in order to get concealed carry permits.

Since the announcements of new regulations, Parrish said demand for concealed handgun certification classes has skyrocketed — especially for Utah concealed carry permits, an emerging trend across the Commonwealth.

Virginians now are seeking permits from the state of Utah, which still has reciprocity with many of the states with which Virginia just severed ties. Utah's permits are available for a fee to non-residents who meet certain requirements.

Parrish said he used to teach one concealed carry class a month with about 12 students at a time.

"But now we've had to expand it and increase our class sizes," Parrish said.

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Concealed carry permits rise

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At the end of the month, he will have taught 10 times as many students as in January 2015, Parrish said. But the classes are just the start.

"It's one thing to learn it on paper, another thing to be a practitioner," Parrish said. "Being a gun owner, you have a new level of responsibility."

Many of Parrish's recent customers have told him that fear of a terrorist attack are driving them to purchase guns. The lawmakers pushing for gun control have framed the movement as a means to curb domestic gun violence.

"The families across our Commonwealth and our nation who have lost loved ones to gun violence make a compelling case for action," Governor Terry McAuliffe said about President Obama's executive action.

Attorney General Herring called his actions a "common-sense step" to make Virginians and law enforcement officers safer.

MASS SHOOTINGS SPUR PERMIT APPLICATIONS

On Dec. 14, 2012 a gunman killed 27 people at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. The following week, the FBI received the most background check requests of any week on record: almost 1 million in seven days.

On Friday, Nov. 27, 2015, the single-day record for background checks was broken: 185,345 requests were made. This is the same day that a shooter killed three people and injured nine at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Already in the Virginia General Assembly, lawmakers have begun to file bills for the upcoming legislative session.

Proposed laws range from a bill allowing some faculty to carry

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BRIAN PARRISH

*co-owner,
Triune Shooting Sports*

concealed weapons on college campuses to a bill prohibiting weapons in state legislative buildings.

One proposal from Sen. Dick Black, Republican from Leesburg, would allow people to conceal handguns in certain places without any license at all, according to legislative tracking website RichmondSunlight.com.

Before the General Assembly session even starts, the website has already flagged 24 proposed bills with the subject "gun" as of Monday.

The legislative session starts today, Wednesday, Jan. 13.

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