

## Can I get a Concealed Carry Permit (CCW)?

By: Public Safety Committee, WNC

In June of this year, Los Angeles Sheriff Alex Villanueva issued a statement that his intent was to increase the number of concealed weapons permits (*otherwise known as a CCW – carry a concealed weapon permit*) his office issues to residents of Los Angeles County. As part of that effort, the Sheriff noted that “the county experienced a 95% uptick in murder, 7% increase in rape, a 13% jump in aggravated assaults, a 40% rise in grand theft auto, and a 22% uptick in arson incidents, compared to the same time frame in 2020.” The Sheriff directly attributed some of the increase to the City of Los Angeles’ decision to cut more than \$150 million dollars from its police department (LAPD), as part of its plan to reallocate resources to social service programs. Though such action was supported by certain organizations within the community at large, some of the resulting negative fallout experienced by individual community members was reduced capacity within the responsible law enforcement agency, leading to fewer officers on patrol and a sharp uptick in crime.

In response, the Sheriff has vowed to lower the “good cause” standard to obtain a CCW, so as to allow stakeholders to have an actual chance of exercising their right to bear arms, or in this case, conceal arms on their person. To qualify in general, any applicant for a CCW must (1) be of good moral character (*standard NCIC background check with Live Scan fingerprinting required*); (2) provide good cause (*discussed below*); (3) be at least 21 years old (*verified by government issued identification*); (4) own a registered firearm in California; and (5) reside within Los Angeles County (*verified by utility invoices issued to applicant*). There are also fees associated with the process -- a \$30 initial application fee, a third-party Live Scan fee (*varies depending on the service provider*), and a \$120 initial license fee (*if the applicant gets to that point*) -- as well as a firearms training course requirement (*to be taken through an authorized training provider*). Despite the foregoing, many stakeholders have found that most of the enumerated requirements are relatively easy to satisfy. The insurmountable obstacle has always been the requirement of demonstrating “good cause” in a manner that fulfills this critical element of the application, thereby allowing the Sheriff to exercise his *may issue* authority to grant an individual their CCW.

What is “good cause” anyway? According to the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department’s Manual of Policy and Procedures, the term “good cause” is defined as:

Sufficient evidence of potential danger to life or of great bodily harm to the applicant, his or her spouse or dependent child, which cannot be adequately dealt with by existing law enforcement resources and which danger cannot be reasonably avoided by alternative measures, and which danger would be significantly mitigated by the applicant's carrying of a concealed firearm.

You may be thinking to yourself, “That’s pretty subjective.” Well it is, and that’s why Los Angeles County is considered to be a *may issue* jurisdiction (*as most counties are in California*), meaning that the head of the applicable law enforcement agency makes the final determination of whether an individual satisfies

the “good cause” requirement or not. Previous Sheriffs, and almost every modern Chief of Police (*otherwise referenced herein as C.O.P.*) for Los Angeles County and City, respectively, have held “good cause” to a very high standard, one that was basically impossible for the vast majority of residents to establish. According to the Daily Bulletin, in 2016 there were over 220 active CCWs in Los Angeles County, out of a population of approximately 10.2 million. Most of those permits were held by retired law enforcement, judges, reserve deputies and a handful of other city officials/employees. Only about 50 to 60 CCWs were held by regular residents. Sheriff Villanueva is looking to change those numbers to give stakeholders in the community more of a fighting chance in the face of decreasing police presence, reductions in certain criminal penalties, and increased overall crime.

In the past, residents of both the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles (*such as the residents of Winnetka*) had to first apply through the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) in order to obtain CCW approval. That approval may only be given by the C.O.P., and historically, as well as presently, application denial was basically inevitable. Even if an individual could fulfill the other requirements, “good cause” would always be the grounds upon which approval was withheld. Now, in a change of policy, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department is allowing all County residents to directly apply through their agency, giving applicants/stakeholders a better chance at CCW issuance.

So if you are of good moral character, reside in the County of Los Angeles, legally own a firearm, and are age eligible, you may want to consider applying through the Sheriff’s Department. As for good cause, set forth the facts which establish that you may be at greater risk than others to be a victim of violent crime. Maybe it is your daily routine, or your employment, or your participation in other lawful organizations that makes you more susceptible to criminal acts. Whatever you decide to say, be clear, truthful, and sincere, and maybe you will meet the Sheriff’s standards on what constitutes good cause.

In the end, if you are successful in getting your CCW, remember that the privilege to conceal carry comes with responsibilities, and such responsibilities can only be successfully handled through consistent firearms practice and education (*beyond the required firearms training course*), a thorough knowledge of applicable self-defense laws, a genuine desire to defend, and a daily exercise of caution.