

# News from the West Virginia Citizens Defense League

For Immediate Release

August 17, 2010

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## Gun Owners Condemn Arrival of Gun Registration in West Virginia

*“Voluntary” gun registration never remains voluntary*

**Charleston, W.Va.** — West Virginia Citizens Defense League President Keith Morgan expressed outrage today at a report in this morning’s [Charleston Gazette](#) and [Charleston Daily Mail](#) that the Charleston Police Department is now encouraging capital city gun owners to “voluntarily” register their guns.

The Gazette reported that Project Gun Safe “includes an effort to document firearms held legally within the city. Charleston police will be giving out safety locks to citizens that voluntarily provide a firearm inventory card for each gun they own to the Charleston Police Department.” In response to this announcement, Morgan said:

“Voluntary” often has varying shades of meaning to someone who is asked by an armed agent of the state (i.e., the police) to “volunteer” something. Rest assured, the word “voluntary” is used because “mandatory” would cause well-deserved outrage among anyone with any understanding of the risk associated with gun registration. Gun registration is a necessary prerequisite to gun confiscation. As such, other states have passed laws preempting municipalities from implementing these types of schemes, such as a 2004 Florida law completely prohibiting so-called “voluntary” gun registration and requiring the destruction of any existing registries.

Morgan says today’s reports add to the urgency for the Legislature to strengthen state laws protecting the rights of law-abiding gun owners from a patchwork quilt of local gun laws throughout the state. Under current state law, Charleston is allowed to continue its current local ordinances denying citizens the right to self-defense on any city-owned property; ration handgun purchases to one per month (imagine the outrage if anyone in government proposed limiting to once per month the exercise of any other constitutionally-protected right); impose a 3-day waiting period on all handgun sales; and maintain a permanent, mandatory registry of all handguns sold by gun dealers located within the City of Charleston. “The Legislature has persistently refused to close these loopholes in West Virginia’s local gun control preemption laws,” Morgan said.

Since 2007, several bills have been introduced in the Legislature at WVCDL's request to strengthen state preemption of local gun laws: 2007 [SB 715](#), 2008 [SB 732](#), 2009 [HB 3335](#), and 2010 [HB 4305](#). The latter two bills include a proposed section (§61-7-18) that would duplicate Florida's anti-registration law that prohibits deceptive, "voluntary" gun registration schemes such as the one now being implemented in Charleston. WVCDL Legislative Director Jim Mullins says that the 2011 version of this bill will include language requiring all state and local government agencies to dispose of all firearms (including those acquired through so-called "gun buy-back" programs) by selling them to the public through federally-licensed dealers. A similar bill ([HB 2528](#)) passed the Virginia General Assembly in 2009 but was vetoed by then-Governor and current Democratic National Committee Chairman Tim Kaine.

Morgan said:

Both the Democratic and Republican parties are to blame for the current state of affairs in Charleston: Democrats Carrie Webster (now a Kanawha County Circuit Judge) and Tim Miley, as chairs of the House Judiciary Committee, have refused hearings on WVCDL's bills. However, most of Charleston's gun control ordinances were authored by Republican City Councilman Tom Lane and enacted during the administration of Republican Mayor Kent Hall. Charleston's new "voluntary" gun registration scheme is being promoted under another Republican mayor, Danny Jones, who is also [on the record](#) as strongly opposing any relaxation of Charleston's current, restrictive gun control ordinances..

Morgan also criticized the Kanawha County Republican Executive Committee for holding its meetings and monthly luncheons at the Charleston Civic Center, which is owned by the City of Charleston and subject to the prohibition on carrying weapons on city-owned property under Charleston ordinances. Morgan said, "A political party that wants to portray itself as being a friend of gun owners and a supporter of an individual's right to keep and bear arms for self-defense should not just talk the talk but walk the walk and stop holding its events at criminal protection zones."

Mullins added that WVCDL's proposal for stronger preemption laws enjoys strong support among candidates for the Legislature who have responded to the [WVCDL 2010 Legislative Candidate Survey](#). Every state Senate candidate and all but two candidates for the House of Delegates who have participated in the [WVCDL 2010 Legislative Candidate Survey](#) have responded Yes to Question 12, which asks, "Will you SUPPORT and vote FOR legislation repealing the grandfather clause in West Virginia's local gun control preemption law?"

WVCDL is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, all-volunteer, grassroots organization of concerned West Virginians who support our individual right to keep and bear arms for defense of self, family, home and state, and for lawful hunting and recreational use, as protected by the state constitution and the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution. WVCDL is the largest, active, West Virginia-based gun rights organization.