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stand against the effort to put a gun in everybody's pocket and in everybody's purse in the name of public safety. We know that public safety is not enhanced by encouraging the proliferation of guns and we know that based on an analysis of recent drop in crime rates in the states. Evidence shows that more concealed handguns do not mean less crime. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime reports from '96 to '97, the nation's overall crime rate dropped 3.2 percent. More telling, crime fell faster in states that have strict carry concealed weapons laws or that don't allow the carrying of concealed weapons at all than in states which have lax concealed carry weapons laws. Contrary to all the arguments, states should not make it easier for citizens to carry concealed weapons in order to reduce crime. In the 29 states that have lax concealed carry weapons laws, the crime fell 2.1 percent from '96 to '97. During the same time period in the 21 states and the District of Columbia, with strict carry laws or which don't allow the carrying concealed weapons at all, the crime rate fell 4.4 percent. The decline in the crime rate of strict licensing in no carry states was 2.1 times that of states with lax concealed carry weapons laws. There are more effective ways to fight crime than to encourage people to carry guns, and we have a sister state that is in the process of doing a ballot initiative which would radically liberalize that state's concealed carry weapons system and all of you should have a picture, a cartoon, that represents a little bit of some of the forces that are working in the state of Missouri right now. Anheuser-Busch, Incorporated, decided to come out in favor of liberalizing the concealed carry weapons laws. I can't imagine a company that is in the business of producing alcohol that would want to be anywhere near a weapons debate, yet they had decided to do that. And, you know, we may...we may hear more about that if that...if that ballot initiative passes. But getting back to the drop in crime...violent...the rate of violent crime, the rate of violent crime fell even faster in states which strict carry laws, falling 4.9 percent in restrictive states compared to 3 percent in lax states. While the rate of violent crime is higher in strict concealed carry weapon states, a look at the violent crime rates over a five-year period provides even more evidence that we don't need lax gun laws to reduce crime. From '92 to '97 the violent crime rate in the strict and no issue states fell 24.8 percent, nearly...