

Former Cops Sue Over 'Good Guy' Gun Denials

By NICK DIVITO

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(CN) - Retired and injured police officers in a Long Island county were wrongly denied gun permits after stepping down, they claim in a \$22-million class action.

Four retired officers say Nassau County, N.Y., its police department and Sheriff Michael Sposato discriminated against them by denying their "good guy" requests to carry a pistol after they left.

The Long Island crew says they're not alone. At least 40 other former officers were denied gun permits after retiring, according to the lawsuit.

Alexandros Perros, Thomas Delle, Nicholas Lenoci and Victor Patalano filed their 41-page class action complaint in Eastern New York Federal Court on Monday. The proposed class includes former or retiring officers of the Nassau County Sheriff's Department who were denied a peace officer pistol license after retirement due to injury or disability.

Perros says he was a corrections officer who injured his back in 2013 while trying to stop an inmate from escaping a psychiatric ward. Delle hurt his neck on the job while Lenoci injured his knee and had to undergo double hip replacement surgery, according to the complaint. Patalano slipped and fell on ice while serving a summons, the lawsuit states.

The men applied for gun permits after retiring, but were denied by the Nassau County Sheriff's Department. The agency's "clear intent" is to punish those who retire because of their injuries, the former officers say.

"At the time that each of the plaintiffs applied for their respective retirements from their employment, plaintiffs also applied for a pistol permit and/or a 'good guy letter,' from the sheriff's department, which would allow them to possess and carry a pistol as a retiree," the complaint states. "Plaintiffs' applications were denied by defendant Sposato. Defendant Sposato's sole reason for his denial was the fact that plaintiffs were injured and/or disabled for medical reasons at the time of their application for retirement."

The department wants to put a "chilling effect on corrections officers reporting injuries and seeking benefits to which they are rightfully entitled for said injuries," according to the lawsuit.

The retired officers seek \$22 million for due process and equal protection violations and disability discrimination. They are represented by Frederick Brewington in Hempstead, N.Y. 