

NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE ACTION

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NRA

April 20, 2021

Representative Barbara Smith Warner
House Committee on Rules
900 Court St., Room 333
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 554 - OPPOSE

Dear Chair Smith Warner and Honorable Members of the Committee on Rules:

On behalf of the tens of thousands of National Rifle Association (NRA) members in Oregon, I am writing to express our strong opposition to Senate Bill 554 (SB 554) and respectfully request that you oppose this legislation.

ORS 166.170 to 176, also known as "firearm preemption", was originally enacted in 1995. Prior to this statute, law-abiding gun owners were subject to an inconsistent patchwork of state laws and local ordinances. A law-abiding citizen traveling on I-5 from Medford to Portland would literally pass-through multiple jurisdictions with completely different laws.

The legislature, recognizing the absurdity of this patchwork, enacted state preemption so that law-abiding gun owners would have consistent, statewide regulations. This law has served Oregonians well for 25 years. Gun owners know what is allowed all over the state. Public safety officers can rely on the law and are able to enforce the law consistently and equitably statewide.

SB 554 seeks to again muddy the water for law abiding gun owners by authorizing cities, counties, metropolitan service districts, port operating commercial airports, school districts, colleges and universities to adopt their own ordinances or policies limiting or precluding affirmative defense for possession of firearms in public buildings by concealed handgun licensees (CHL). While the bill does require local governments post "gun free zone" signage at locations that do not allow guns, Oregonians will not know from one invisible municipal boundary to the next what is allowed until they physically arrive at a public building. A violation that will lead a responsible permit holder to life as a felon and a prohibited person.

The bill also redefines public building to include any building owned by the state or by a city, a county or a metropolitan service district, and the grounds adjacent to those buildings. Redefining public building in this manner would subject CHL holders to confusion of what defines public buildings and the grounds adjacent. Special districts include everything from water districts to fire districts. It is unreasonable for a CHL holder to know where these special district buildings are or what defines the grounds adjacent to them until they are already there and have potentially broken the law.

The Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Oregon guarantees an individual the right to bear arms for self-defense. The need for self-defense does not arbitrarily end at the doors of a

public building. Approximately 300,000 Oregonians have sought and lawfully obtained CHLs for self-defense. These law-abiding licensees have undergone extensive background checks, met or exceeded firearms training criteria and have been permitted to carry a concealed handgun by their respective Sheriff. Permit holders are authorized to carry in nearly every corner of Oregon and have done so responsibly for well over 30 years.

This legislation will not enhance public safety and it is silent on all weapons, except firearms. Gun free zones are created and enforced with nothing more than a sheet of paper, and have never stopped a criminal act. To the contrary, one might argue that these areas invite criminal activity rather than discouraging it.

On behalf of the tens of thousands of NRA members in Oregon, we respectfully request you oppose this legislation. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Aoibheann Cline, Esq.
State Director
National Rifle Association - Institute for Legislative Action