

My name is Heather McNeil, I live in Bend, and I am supporting 554-A20. I am familiar with guns. My father was an army officer and a hunter so there were always guns in the house, safely unloaded and locked. My brother and his two sons are hunters and gun sellers. One of my nephews is a police officer in Montana. I'm not against guns, I'm against gun violence.

Whenever legislation is proposed concerning gun safety there are gun owners who protest that their 2nd Amendment rights are being threatened. SB554-A20 does not take away someone's guns, nor prohibit someone from purchasing a gun as long as they pass a background check. What it does do is allow local communities to make sure their citizens and families are safe.

I do not believe we want citizens who are not trained in crisis response, such as when there is an active shooter, bringing guns to elementary schools or airports. As a legislator, do you want citizens wearing guns into the State Capitol, when you have no idea of their intent? In May through December of 2020 there were at least 85 instances of armed protestors at state Capitols, including here in Oregon. Democracy doesn't work at gunpoint. Armed intimidation IS gun violence, and I urge you to help stop the violence. Let local communities decide what they will allow and what will keep their citizens safe.

I also want to address the issue of safe storage. In this nation, a week ago an 8-year-old in North Carolina accessed a gun in a family member's parked car and fatally shot himself while playing with the gun. Three days ago a three-year-old girl in Texas found a gun in the side door of her family's car, shot herself and died. Today there was a nine-year-old in Kentucky who found a relative's gun and shot himself. And in Aloha, OR, in October, 2020, a 3-year old fatally shot himself in the head with a gun he found in a bedside drawer. It is estimated that 4.6 million children live in a household with an unlocked, loaded gun. A top shelf, a bedside drawer, a glove box are not safe storage. Children are curious. Children are smart. Children will find the gun, play with the gun, and tragedy may follow. In addition, easy access to a gun contributes to the alarming rate of suicides. We can make sure that it is less likely for a child to die by accidental firearm injury, or for a suicide to result in death, by passing a safe storage bill.

I urge you to support SB554-A20.