

Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measures  
Chair Prozanski  
Members - Senator Thatcher, Dembrow, Geiser, Heard, Linthicum, Manning

I am writing in support of SB554, to eliminate the open-carry of weapons in public spaces for ALL Oregonians, including those with license to carry a concealed weapon, excluding only law enforcement officials. The "open-carry" of weapons is a form of intimidation and bullying, both forms of discrimination. The presence of a gun in the public sector certainly is not conducive to civil discourse. I also support a broader definition of public space to include grocery stores, markets, retail stores, parks, and large venues such as stadiums.

I respect the 2nd Amendment right of responsible adults to own and use guns. I know that the vast majority of gun owners and users are responsible and careful. I have never owned a gun. My only experience is with a 45-pistol that I faithfully learned how to clean, care for, and shoot as part of my training before being deployed to Vietnam as a Navy physician (1970-1971). As a primary care internist for over 35 years I knew that possession of a gun represented a major risk factor for those who are burdened with mental illness. As a citizen I know that careless mistakes can put vulnerable people, especially minors, at risk.

We have an (epidemic) of gun violence in our country, a public health crisis. There were close to 40,000 firearm deaths in the U.S. (2018), about 108 per day, and 4.5 per hour. In 2015 there were just over 11 gun violence deaths per 100,000 population, compared with just 1/100,000 in other comparable countries. (Editorials. US gun violence and deaths. BMJ 2020; 368)

I encourage you to approve SB554. It will lessen the tension of the moment, thereby encouraging discourse that is civil and not combative. Hopefully such action will promote productive discussion on ways to improve gun-safety across the population. We humans are not perfect. We need laws to keep us focusing on what is best for the common good and not only ourselves.

These comments are personal and do not represent any official correspondence from the VHA or OHSU.

Sincerely

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