

Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

We implore you to reject SB 554 and insure that it does not pass out of Committee, as it is a clear infringement on the constitutional rights of Oregonians. The ownership of firearms is a natural right protected by the United States and Oregon Constitutions, which all of you have sworn to defend and uphold. To support this bill would be – in our opinion - an abrogation of your oath of office.

We are very disappointed in the continuing attacks on law-abiding gun owners by this Legislature. SB 554 is very similar to other bills proposed over the last several years; however, it has greatly expanded the definition of “public building.” It is yet another piece of legislation that will penalize law-abiding Oregonians, while doing nothing to stop the people who are actually committing crimes. As with other infringements on our Second Amendment rights, these bills are presented as “common-sense” gun regulation. Where some see “common sense,” others – like us - view this legislation only as an incremental assault on our liberty.

SB 554 is a direct attack on Concealed Handgun License (CHL) holders – law-abiding gun owners who have undergone an extensive background check, fingerprinting, and who have received training in the safe use of firearms. CHL holders are responsible citizens who have gone to lengths to ensure the free exercise of their Second Amendment rights - this bill will turn them into criminals. SB 554, like its predecessors - will in allow nearly any public agency to unilaterally create “Gun-Free Zones,” which are proven to be kill zones. Does the Legislature really think that anyone intent on committing mayhem in a public building will heed the restrictions that will be spawned by this bill? The language in this bill is confusing, and there is a high probability that it will conflict with existing laws and regulations. Allowing local jurisdictions to create their own restrictions on CHL holders will likely result in numerous cases of non-compliance, both involuntary and voluntary. A CHL holder would have no way of knowing the regulations that were established at a particular jurisdiction. This is the primary reason for state pre-emption.

My wife and I are both CHL holders. We’re responsible gun owners, and my wife is a 34-year law enforcement veteran – highly trained in the use of firearms. As with all CHL holders, we carry our firearms lawfully for our own protection, as well as the protection of others. We do not appreciate state attempts at limiting our right to self-defense. This bill will effectively disarm us, leaving us vulnerable to criminals. We do not intend to become victims. There are already federal laws prohibiting firearms in certain sensitive facilities such as courthouses, and so far, those laws have made sense. Unfortunately, as with many of the bills being proposed in the current session, SB 554 is yet another example of state overreach. It is a “solution” in search of a problem. With the patchwork of regulations it will engender, it clearly has the potential to make felons out of law-abiding gun owners. The fact that a violation – which could be unknowing - will result in five (5) years’ imprisonment and a \$125,000 fine is unconscionable! To our knowledge, there is no precedent for an Oregon CHL holder committing any type of firearm-related crime while in a public facility, so there seems to be no logical reason or need for this legislation.

We respectfully request that the Committee reject SB 554, which is an unnecessary and dangerous piece of legislation.

Thank You,

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