

Chair and Members of the committee. My name is Greg Terhune and I reside in Salem.

I am opposed to SB 554 and any amended versions.

It is generally assumed that legislation is put forward to address and fix problems. SB 554 does not do this. Instead, it creates problems.

The current concealed and open-carry laws have worked exceedingly well for the past 25 years. (Setting aside the fact that they, like all gun laws, only regulate and place restrictions on law-abiding citizens—not criminals.)

In the past 25 years, there have been few negative incidents involving Oregon Concealed Handgun License holders, whose numbers now exceed 300,000. Ordinary citizens, fully vetted by a local sheriff, State Police, and the FBI. In fact, national data show that law enforcement personnel are more likely, per capita, to be involved in criminal activity than concealed handgun license holders; yet law enforcement personnel, active or retired, are exempt from the restrictions imposed by SB 554. Why is that?

For decades, Oregon Concealed Handgun License holders have gone about the activities of their daily lives without the stress of worrying too much about where they can or cannot carry. The sponsors of SB 554 wish to create a minefield of gun-free zones to discourage law-abiding people from exercising their constitutionally-protected right to “bear” arms. They choose to remain blissfully ignorant of the fact that criminals ignore gun-free zones.

Oh, but there will be signs to warn people. How often are you distracted by conversation or other things when you enter a property or building. Or how often do other people block our view of signage.

As an NRA-certified instructor, I have trained hundreds of people in safe gun handling and shooting. Interestingly, during the past several years most of my students have been women. This legislation seeks to take away, through geographic restriction, the right of those faced with a disparity of force from protecting themselves.

The sponsors of SB 554 seek to raise the cost of obtaining and renewing a Concealed Handgun License. Why would they want to do this? Clearly, it is meant to price people out of being able to protect themselves. Raise the fees high enough, and very few people will be able to afford to “purchase” their constitutional right to “bear” arms. But who do these high fees discourage? Not the wealthy, and not the middle class. I’ll tell you who—the poor. Those who reside in rundown, high-crime neighborhoods of Portland, Salem, Eugene, and other communities. The very people with the greatest need to the God-given right of self-protection.

Please vote down SB 554. It is a solution without a problem. It is yet another attempt by those with emotional aversion to firearms to nibble away at the rights of others.