

02/22/2021

Chair and Members of the committee,

My name is Travis West and I am a resident of Sherman County. I oppose Senate Bill 554.

People who go through the trouble to get a concealed handgun license do so for a variety of reasons, but perhaps one of the more common reasons is so that they can *defend* themselves. A wise person would not depend solely on security and law enforcement to save their life in the event of an active shooter. Consider the horrible Parkland, Florida shooting that occurred in 2018. That shooting occurred in a public building and the shooter killed 17 people in less than FOUR minutes. Four minutes. You, as a private citizen, are responsible for YOUR own safety. People who choose to train, receive a concealed handgun license, and then arm themselves should not be stripped of that right by a local government or school. Senate Bill 554 does just that; it gives local government, schools, and others the go-ahead to restrict firearm rights even more.

Under current law, a person that holds a concealed handgun license still has the legal ability to carry a firearm on their person so that they can defend their life. If this bill passes, then these people won't be able to do that in a variety of places throughout Oregon, potentially to include their own workspaces, the schools their children attend, places they visit, or elsewhere. Removing the ability for these people to defend themselves is completely inappropriate and dangerous. Are public buildings in Oregon being plagued by gun violence from concealed handgun license holders? Actual gun violence? No, they are not. Proponents of this bill are upset about people being able to *carry* firearms on them. That is all they can cite, because concealed handgun license holders are not shooting up public spaces.

As a law enforcement officer in the State of Oregon, I fall under an exception in the statute this bill addresses. I can legally arm myself in public buildings. I can have the ability to protect my life and the lives of others in public buildings. Law enforcement officers like me are even utilized to protect the Oregon State Capitol and other public spaces. Law enforcement isn't a special warrior class though. Sure, crime rates are low amongst law enforcement officers, but what do you think is the crime rate amongst concealed handgun license holders?

We are ALL citizens that should be able to exercise our God-given, constitutionally protected rights, and per the State and Federal constitutions, the right to bear arms is included in that. If our Congressmen benefit from firearm possession, so should the citizens. Don't be hypocrites. Senate Bill 554 is a disgrace and I am offended it is even being considered.

With that said, even if this bill passes, there is no way I will ever enforce an ordinance adopted as a result of this bill. And if I witness another law enforcement officer enforcing one, it will be my duty to intervene, for I have taken an oath to defend our State and Federal constitutions. It doesn't matter how "local" these ordinances stem; our firearm rights cannot be eliminated. Please, as elected officials, take your oaths seriously. Stop making my job harder and STOP trying to infringe on our rights.

Thanks for your time. This concludes my testimony.