

**From the Desk of Representative Dacia Grayber  
Regarding House Bill 3076**



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**Oregon needs to stop the flow of illegal guns — and we know how to do it**

*Op Ed Written by Daniel Webster (researcher and professor at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions)*

If Oregon wants to make lasting progress in reducing gun violence and the devastating ripple effects, the state must address a largely overlooked but crucial driver: the unchecked flow of firearms from licensed gun dealers to the illegal market.

I've spent over 30 years studying the causes and consequences of gun violence and one thing is clear: The way we regulate or fail to regulate gun dealers has a clear impact on gun crime. A growing number of states are doing what Oregon has yet to do — require state-level licensing and oversight of firearm dealers. When firearm dealers are not regulated and have insufficient oversight, gun traffickers — including criminals both in the US and abroad — exploit these gaps by identifying licensed gun dealers who will sell them large quantities of guns.

Licensed gun dealers (Federal Firearm Licensees or FFLs) are regulated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. But the bureau has been underfunded for decades and cannot meet its mandate to promote gun dealers' compliance with federal firearm laws.

The bureau has had a policy goal of inspecting every gun dealer at least once every three years. In reality, it missed nearly half of its inspection targets between 2018 and 2020 during the first Trump administration. Less than 0.5% of gun dealers with documented law violations had their licenses revoked during Trump's first administration.

During former President Joe Biden's Zero Tolerance policy for noncompliance with federal gun laws, the number of gun dealer license revocations tripled. Now, Trump has reversed Biden's attention to firearm dealers' compliance and weakened the ATF's capacity and its commitment to carry out its mission of ensuring that firearm dealers are not funneling large quantities of guns to criminals and traffickers.

This is not just a bureaucratic failure. It impacts public safety with life-and-death consequences. In 2023, the firearms bureau traced over 4,700 guns recovered from criminal suspects and crime scenes in Oregon. Three out of every four of these Oregon crime guns originated from sales by Oregon gun dealers.

Nearly 700 of these guns turned up in crime within a year of retail sale. Such short intervals between a firearm's sale and its involvement in crime is an indicator of illegal sales, negligence or illegal activity by employees that diligent, law-abiding gun dealers can stop.

Between 2018 and 2022, Oregon's gun homicide rate increased by 131 percent. While gun homicides in Oregon have declined significantly since then, the provisional rate for 2024 was still 62 percent higher than it was in 2018. Comprehensive, evidence based strategies are needed to further this decline. This includes stronger measures to look upstream and prevent firearms from being diverted for use in crime.

In the past months, three major cartel-linked fentanyl busts in Oregon resulted in the recovery of large caches of firearms — with 48 firearms recovered in one incident. In the past few years, several high profile gang and cartel members have been prosecuted for federal firearm trafficking rings in Oregon. Federally licensed firearms dealers are often either complicit in facilitating large-volume gun trafficking or they can spot tell-tale signs of trafficking and refuse to make sales to suspected traffickers.

Here's the good news: States have the capacity to regulate firearm dealers to ensure that they comply with state firearm laws. Fifteen states have implemented firearm dealer licensing and inspection programs and fill the enforcement gap left by an under-resourced ATF.

Research that I have conducted shows that states with strong gun dealer licensing and oversight have fewer guns that are diverted for use in crime. And other research links strong state-level gun dealer regulations with lower levels of gun homicide.

Oregon now has the opportunity to take the same smart, evidence-informed approach. HB 3076 would create a state-level oversight system for gun dealers, helping ensure that those licensed to sell firearms follow the law and do not become easy targets for traffickers.

It is time to align Oregon's laws with what research and other states have made clear: A small number of gun dealers play a key role in the flow of firearms to the illegal market, and without oversight, that flow becomes a flood. HB 3076 could reduce gun and drug trafficking and make our communities safer.