

Submitter: Stan Vizina

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency
Management, Federal and World Affairs

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB947

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB947, which seeks to replace the term "militia" with "National Guard" in our state laws. This change is not a mere semantic update; it represents a fundamental shift in the interpretation of constitutional rights and could erode the ability of citizens to keep and bear arms as recognized by both the U.S. Constitution and our state constitution.

The term "militia" has historically and legally encompassed all able-bodied citizens capable of defending their state and nation. The Founding Fathers deliberately distinguished between the militia and standing armies, including the modern National Guard, which is a federally regulated and controlled force. By replacing "militia" with "National Guard," this bill effectively narrows the scope of who qualifies as part of the militia, excluding ordinary citizens and thereby weakening the people's right to bear arms.

This legislative change poses serious concerns:

Erosion of Constitutional Rights – The Second Amendment and many state constitutions explicitly affirm the right of the people to form militias separate from government-controlled military forces. Changing "militia" to "National Guard" undermines this historical understanding.

Legal and Historical Precedent – Courts have consistently recognized that "militia" refers to the body of armed citizens, not merely government-controlled units. Attempting to redefine this term contradicts legal precedent and the intent of our nation's founders.

Increased Government Control Over Civilian Firearm Ownership – This change could lay the groundwork for future legislative actions that limit civilian firearm possession by asserting that only government-sanctioned forces (such as the National Guard) have the right to bear arms.

This bill is not a minor linguistic revision; it is a calculated effort to shift the legal foundation of firearm rights in our state. I urge you to reject [Bill Number] and uphold the traditional, constitutional understanding of the militia as including the body of armed citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I respectfully request that you vote against this bill and protect the rights of law-abiding citizens in our state.

Sincerely,
Stan Vizina
Portland, Oregon