

Submitter: Donald Powers
On Behalf Of: the right of the people to b
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Violence, both with and without firearms, is a complex phenomenon that has no clear causal relationship to rates of gun ownership or the relative “strength” of gun laws restricting or burdening lawful possession. The majority of gun deaths are suicides, which inherently raise broader concerns about mental health. Criminal gun violence is largely driven not by lawful gun owners, but by a small subset of repeat violent offenders who are already prohibited from lawfully possessing firearms. Public policies that fail to address this reality are significantly related to recent increases in violent crime across the nation. Despite the significant role mass public shootings play in national conversations on gun violence, they are by far one of the least common mechanisms of gun violence. Finally, lawful gun owners play a significant and often underappreciated role in furthering public safety, and therefore also in furthering public health. In an opinion written by Justice Clarence Thomas, a majority of six justices affirmed that the Second Amendment means what it says—“the people” have a right not just to keep but to bear arms, including in public places for self-defense.

Oregon is coming off of a string of historically violent years, yet it remains obsessed with punishing gun owners who merely want to protect themselves.