
OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 700

In writing before the Senate Judiciary Committee / April 5, 2013

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Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association is comprised of Oregon's 36 elected county sheriffs. Sheriffs take seriously their charge to be "conservators of the peace." Their role in public safety is broad, including routine patrol, investigating crime, search and rescue, marine patrol, jails, community corrections, court security, civil services and the issuance of concealed handgun licenses.

America is still reeling from the horrific murders at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. And, closer to home, the murders at Clackamas Town Center have everyone thinking about the Second Amendment, gun-owners' rights and the right of the public to be safe. As we engage in a public discussion on these issues, Oregon Sheriffs hope the Legislature will be slow and deliberate in considering changes to gun laws. In the parlance of law enforcement, we believe the punishment should fit the crime.

In the case of Senate Bill 700, Oregon Sheriffs oppose the bill and the -14 amendment.

I assume only the -14 amendment is under consideration and, as such, this testimony relates only to that amendment.

Oregon Sheriffs supported requiring background checks at gun stores. Oregon Sheriffs supported the ballot measure requiring background checks at gun shows. In fact, Oregon Sheriffs were listed in no less than two of the arguments in favor of the ballot measure in the Voters' Pamphlet published by the Secretary of State. Oregon Sheriffs have never been accused of being soft on crime or indifferent to ensuring that firearms stay out of the hands of people who should not legally possess them. In fact, Oregon Sheriffs had a policy of not issuing CHLs to applicants if the applicant could not legally possess a firearm under Federal law. Unfortunately and surprisingly, Oregon courts held that not being able to own a firearm was not sufficient grounds to deny a CHL to an applicant. This is a loophole that Oregon Sheriffs will try to fix later this session.

While the goal of universal background checks is certainly laudable, Oregon Sheriffs know from experience that Senate Bill 700 will substantially inconvenience law abiding citizens who will make efforts to follow the law -- some failing to do so resulting in harsh penalties -- while those who seek firearms for illegal purposes will find the weapon of their choice on the black market without any delay or red tape. Even if someone unable to legally obtain a firearm goes through and fails in an effort to obtain a firearm legally, Senate Bill 700 will not prevent that person from immediately purchasing another firearm from the black market. SB700 might briefly delay some people from obtaining a firearm, but it cannot and will not prevent criminals from getting firearms.

In sum, Oregon Sheriffs do not believe adopting SB700 or the -14 amendment to SB700 will make our communities safer or Oregon safer. Oregon Sheriffs urge the Judiciary Committee to keep the bill in committee until adjournment. Thank you for considering our input.

Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

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