

05 April 2013

Mr. Chairman, senators, and members of the public, thank you for your attention. My name is Dave Johnsen, from Portland, Oregon, and I am a lifelong gun owner, a gun nut if you will. I am also a concealed handgun licensee, but I am not carrying a weapon at this time. My comments are only my opinions and do not represent the opinions of my employer or of any group to which I belong or with which I am affiliated.

I own multiple guns of many different types and styles. I have black powder weapons that can fire one shot every 2 or 3 minutes. I have bolt action rifles that were actually used in the world wars. I have plinking guns, hunting rifles, semi-automatic rifles, and handguns.

Why? Gun handling is a skill, and to become proficient at a skill is a quintessentially human endeavor. Guns are tools that can be used for defense of my family. Some of my guns have a particular personal or historical connection. Guns are fun and, with safety in mind, can result in hours of recreation and form the basis of family outings.

Given all this, it might surprise you to hear that I feel our gun controls are too lax in Oregon and in the country.

As a gun owner, I have no problem at all with the four bills under consideration today. I would like to address two of them.

Clearly, SB700 is the most important of these bills. Famously, "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." True enough, but if people who shouldn't have guns are prevented from easily buying them, maybe they wouldn't be able to kill people so easily.

Yes, the mental health system in this country is broken. It is very badly broken. But when a patient presents with a broken leg in the emergency department, you set and cast the leg; you don't decide that the leg wouldn't be broken if the patient wasn't overweight and do nothing. Today we should prevent unstable and criminal people from getting guns easily while we address the mental health issues at the same time. Close the loophole.

SB796 is overdue. The class I received to become eligible for my concealed handgun license was, quite frankly, a joke. Since that class, I have taken multiple additional classes that addressed both proficiency in handling the weapon (I am now quite proficient) and, more important, the ramifications of presenting that weapon and pulling that trigger. If anything, SB796 doesn't go far enough.

If a person needs to use a weapon to defend themselves but they have no experience in firing that weapon, chances for a good outcome are greatly reduced. In fact, the chances for a horrific outcome are unacceptably high. Training is essential.

Neither of these bills infringes on my rights as a second amendment supporter, and both should be made law.

Thank you for your time and your effort to keep people safer from gun violence.