

Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee

Argument against SB 347, 699, 700, 796

April 6, 2013

I am against all four bills as they would do nothing to reduce mass shootings, or everyday street gun crime, and would be an imposition on law abiding gun owners, and 347 would actually endanger school children. The ideas which would reduce these crimes got only brief mentions during the testimony, but are unfortunately not the subject of any of these bills. They are:

1. Taking a hard look at what has happened to mental health in the last 60-100 years, getting treatment and even involuntary commitment when necessary, funded and past legal challenges. A desire for a focus on mental health was mentioned by many who testified, and a few identified it as the core cause of violence including gun violence.
2. Much stiffer penalties for gun owners who fail to secure their firearms and allow children and the insane in their households to get access. If you are going to own potentially dangerous things, you are responsible for securing them. That is true of dangerous chemicals and poisons, explosives, and it is true of firearms. I heard the family of Cindy Yuille call for steps in this direction.
3. The video game industry. Most kids play games and never take the behavior into the real world so I am not in favor of banning them, but parents need resources in the way of education in what to look for as signs from their children that they are not distinguishing game play from reality, and support for parents who have out of control kids. Yes, we probably need more juvenile jail space. Some kids can be steered straight and some just cannot. It must have been 50 witnesses into the morning before anyone mentioned video games.
4. A talk with the media. I strongly support free speech, but the media is complicit by making the mass shooters famous, which is what they crave. I would ask the media to cease publishing the names and pictures of the killers. I believe we could get public support for this, I hear it a lot.

Unfortunately, none of these ideas are within the bills heard on April 5. Instead, three of these four bills are more attacks on concealed handgun license holders who never have been and never will be any part of the problem of violent crime, and further are the solution much more often than the media reports. The concealed carrier at Clackamas Mall on December 11, 2012 who kept the murders to only two is a perfect example.

The fourth bill, on background checks, would be a good idea if the checks worked. As you know, Jared Loughner and Seung-Hui Cho both passed background checks so clearly the check system does not protect. If we were to spend effort fixing it so it did, I would then be in favor of it. And I would help in getting it fixed. As is, it is again only an imposition on the law abiding. It may stop a few who are considering crime, but the hardened criminals and the insane, strongly bent on committing crime, will find a way to secure a firearm even if it takes years, usually by stealing it. That is the unfortunate truth. So I am not entirely against background checks but I think if we are going to do it, it should be done right. So let's fix it, then talk about expanding it.

I am sure it is difficult to say no to the large number of people who argued in favor of these bills. What I heard the most from those in favor, hopefully you did as well, is a simple misunderstanding that guns

equal crime. They do not and seemingly cannot, distinguish lawful gun owners from criminals. These people mean well, they just are not aware of the fact that guns are used hundreds of times more often to prevent crime and save lives than they are to commit crime and take innocent lives. Guns are used to kill somewhere around 11,000 people annually in the U.S.. At an absolute minimum they are used 220,000 times to prevent crimes. This is the number that is reported to the FBI, but of course most instances are never reported. It is likely somewhere around ten times that, or 2 million. That is 200 times the rate at which they are used to kill. Simply put, guns are used 200 times more often for GOOD than for BAD. There are a lot of innocent people who have been able to prevent themselves from becoming victims, who now will become victims if you make it more difficult to own and carry firearms.

The worst of all of this is the school kids. There were no armed adults to protect the kids at Sandy Hook and no armed people to stop Cho at Virginia Tech. 26 and 32 dead. There was an armed citizen at Clackamas Mall December 2012 – 2 dead. There was an armed member of the congregation at New Life Church in Colorado 2007 – 2 dead. 26 and 32 vs 2 and 2. **This is a giant no-brainer: armed citizens SAVE LIVES.** The proof is all around you.

The anti-gun folks talk fearfully about what might happen when armed citizens are present. But they don't talk about what actually does and has happened. We don't have to wonder what might happen - I just listed it above. The clear and compelling evidence is that armed citizens stop the killing before the police can arrive in virtually every occurrence when they are present, and I am not personally aware of an armed citizen accidentally shooting the wrong person. Concealed carry has been going on for 20 years in Oregon schools and there has been not one instance of a CHL holder causing any injury. Why on earth would you move to restrict them? They just might be able to stop something like Sandy Hook. Don't we owe it to the kids to do the best we can to protect them? Is that empty hands and no chance of survival, or a gun in the hands of a trained person and at least a chance?

That leads to my fifth and most important idea that would actually do some good: Arming school staff. Note, I didn't say teachers. I actually do not support teachers being armed in classrooms in most cases, nor do I think it necessary. One gun somewhere in the front office, in a safe, and at least one member of the front office staff trained, I believe would stop most school shootings. The shooters that go to schools are weaklings and cowards, not hardened gang bangers who are down for a gunfight. They wither at the first sign of armed resistance. A local parent could donate a gun, and a local collection could be taken up for the safe. Oregon firearms trainers have offered to train school staff for free. No taxpayer money required.

I hope I have helped you see that the four bills presently before us are not good, and some ideas that are. Please cease with the attacks on CHL holders and let's get to work actually fixing problems. I am ready to help from the point of view of gun owners.

Sincerely,  
Bill Dewey  
Tigard  
[deweywil@comcast.net](mailto:deweywil@comcast.net)