

Testimony to Senate Judiciary Committee
April 5, 2013

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee.

My name is Tom O'Connor. I'm retired and live in Clackamas County.

I'm here as a gun owner to support the four bills before you today and common sense gun regulation in general.

I grew up here in Oregon and learned to hunt and fish with my father and grandfather and took gun safety lessons and marksmanship through the Boy Scouts. I want to maintain the ability of responsible sportsmen to continue to hunt and fish in Oregon.

I support background checks for private sales. I recently turned in for destruction a couple of inherited pistols because I had no use for them and in large part because I didn't want them falling into the wrong hands without a regularized background check system.

I support ensuring that local school districts can restrict weapons in schools. Guns have no place in schools – concealed or otherwise except in the hands of law enforcement or school security. It's just too easy for a terrible accident to occur and it sends the wrong message to kids about what is responsible gun ownership. Teachers aren't trained to make the kinds of life or death decisions that the military and law enforcement must make. Neither is the average citizen or gun owner. I know I am not.

I support legislation to restrict open carry of weapons here in the Capitol or in any public place for that matter. Openly carrying firearms in the Capitol or on our streets and neighborhoods is intimidation pure and simple. Free speech and the right to petition our elected officials cannot exist when citizens look over their shoulder and see a guy with an AR 15.

These bills are common sense steps. The 2nd amendment has never meant that people could carry around any type of weapon, anyplace, anytime. Even the Heller Decision explicitly recognized appropriate regulations to protect the public.

Growing up as a hunter, I know we limit the number of rounds a shotgun can hold in order to conserve wildlife and to provide for a safer experience for other hunters. If we can pass laws and regulations to protect ducks we surely can and must do the same to protect our children and our fellow citizens in public places and here in the Capitol.

We'll never stop every violent act but we must adopt – really return to – sensible common practice and regulations about the use of firearms in order to reduce the current level of violence and risk, particularly to our children.

Thank you.