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STATE & LOCAL AFFAIRS DIVISION  
DANIEL REID, OREGON STATE LIAISON

April 15, 2015

The Honorable Floyd Prozanski  
Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary

Re: Senate Bill 945– OPPOSE

Dear Chairman Prozanski:

On behalf of the members of The National Rifle Association, I oppose Senate bill 945. This legislation will do little to make children safer and instead impede an individual's right to self-defense.

### **Firearm Accidents among Minors are Rare**

Firearm storage legislation ignores the fact that Oregon firearm owners are extremely responsible with their firearms and that firearms are involved in a disproportionately low number of fatal accidents among children. Data from the Oregon Health Authority (2009-2013) for children 0-17 shows an average of one child per year is killed in a firearm-related accident, accounting for approximately 1.7% of all accidental deaths. This same data shows the much more likely cause of accidental deaths among children to be suffocation (24.1%), drowning (19%), poisoning including prescription drugs (5.2%), and falls (3.4%).

Further, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that nationally since 1975, the annual number of firearm accident deaths among children ages 0-14 has declined by 87 percent, even as population, the number of gun owners, and the number of guns owned have risen substantially.

### **Remedy in Current Law**

Oregon's reckless endangerment statute ORS 163.195 provides a Class A misdemeanor penalty for a person who recklessly engages in a conduct which creates a substantial risk of serious physical injury to another person. This current statute could likely be used to prosecute an irresponsible firearm owner.

More significant, however, is the civil remedy available. ORS 30.010 provides for civil action by the parents of a minor child who is injured or killed. The prospect of losing your own child, or facing civil litigation brought by the parents of a young victim, should serve as greater motivation to store firearms responsibly than the criminal penalty provided in SB 945.

### **It is Wrong to Single out Firearms**

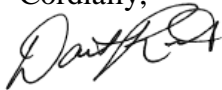
Given the fact that current law already exists, the National Rifle Association is opposed to the notion of "sending a message" to firearm owners by singling out firearms in state law as particularly evil objects. There are many other items around the house which claim more children's lives than firearms. If the proponents of this bill were genuinely interested in saving as many kids as possible, they would at least propose legislation which criminalizes the storage of *any* item capable of causing injury or death to a child.

### **Education**

Unfortunately, the legislation being proposed is more symbolic than anything. The best way to prevent accidents among children is through programs such as NRA's Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program, which has been taught to over 10 million children nationwide. Elementary school-aged children are taught that if they encounter a firearm unsupervised, they should remember Eddie's life-saving message: "Stop. Don't Touch. Leave The Area. Tell An Adult!" The Oregon House and Senate recognized the importance of the Eddie Eagle Gun Safety Program in 1999 when they passed Senate Bill 887.

Thank you for your attention and I ask that you oppose this bill.

Cordially,



Daniel S. Reid  
State Liaison

Cc: Members, Senate Committee on Judiciary