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## Sheriff Riley opposes enhanced gun background checks



Bruce Riley

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Linn County Sheriff Bruce Riley doesn't believe that a legislative proposal to mandate background checks for private gun sales in Oregon would deter crime.

Earlier this week, in response to questions about the measure, Senate Bill 941, Riley posted a letter about his opinion on the Linn County Sheriff's Office Facebook page.

"It all started because I had received several emails and phone calls asking how I stand on this bill," Riley said. "So, on Tuesday, I posted a letter explaining my views. It just blew up."

The post has generated more than than 111,000 Facebook views in just two days.

Riley said there have been more than 200 comments and 1,900 likes and nearly all of them support his stance.

"While this bill may look good on the surface, don't be fooled," Riley's letter notes. "It does nothing to make our families, communities, schools or businesses safer. Adding additional requirements and unnecessary laws for law abiding citizens is a waste of time and resources — time and resources that could be better spent on stiffening our current laws that deal with crimes

committed with guns and mental health issues that currently face our community every day.”

Riley added, “As your sheriff, I am committed to keeping guns away from criminals. I am equally committed in allowing law abiding citizens the right to possess firearms without further infringement.”

Riley sees the legislation as “a feel good bill ... window dressing.”

Riley believes if approved the bill will “add another layer of government and fees to law abiding citizens and infringe on their Second Amendment rights.

“This won’t do anything to take guns out of the hands of criminals,” Riley said. “The Legislature should focus on stiffening the laws and penalties we already have.”

Riley said the basis of new legislation should focus on increasing mental health services in the state.

“This bill is purely smoke and mirrors,” Riley said. “Criminals will continue to get guns illegally by stealing them or through the black market.”

Proponents and opponents of SB 941 testified in Salem Wednesday. The bill was scheduled for a legislative work session on Thursday, but was held over by Senate Judiciary Chairman Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene, until Monday.

A 27-year Linn County Sheriff’s Office employee, Riley was promoted from undersheriff to sheriff in January 2014 to fill the last year of former Sheriff Tim Mueller’s term after Mueller retired.

Riley was then elected officially by Linn County voters in November.

His predecessor made national headlines when he sent Vice President Joe Biden a letter informing him that Mueller and his deputies would not infringe on the Second Amendment rights of local residents.

At the time, Biden was traveling across the country promoting stricter gun control laws nationwide.

Senate Bill 941 is only one of several gun-related bills proposed by Democrats in the Legislature.

Another bill, Senate Bill 945, would make it a crime if a gun that is not secured in a private residence is used in the commission of a crime by a minor.

The measure would exempt gun owners from liability if the guns were kept locked away or if the gun was taken through a break-in.

Riley said he generally believes that gun permits mostly “add expense for honest folks and they don’t keep guns out of the hands of criminals.”

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Contact Linn County reporter Alex Paul at 541-812-6114.

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