



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OREGON**

April 22, 2015

To: House Committee on Rules
Rep. Val Hoyle, Chair
Members of the Committee

Re: SB 941, Criminal Background Checks before Transfer of Firearms: SUPPORT

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan, grassroots political organization that encourages informed citizen participation in government. We have a national position on Gun Safety and strongly support SB 941, which would close loopholes in current criminal background check laws when transferring firearms. We fully recognize that no law is perfect, and no single law can stem the tide of gun violence in our state overnight, but passage of this law is a big step forward in helping to safeguard the health and safety of Oregon's citizens.

The evidence from states where similar laws exist is irrefutable. Universal background checks do save lives—the lives of crime victims, the lives of domestic abuse victims, the lives of children who are shot accidentally, and the lives of those contemplating suicide. How often we have heard the argument that bad guys will always be able to obtain guns, so it's pointless to pass criminal background check laws. But that argument doesn't hold when you're talking about saving lives. For example, we know that laws requiring safer cars and the wearing of seatbelts have reduced accident injuries and fatalities over the years. So why would we hesitate to put into place a strong universal background check law that we can reliably predict will reduce the incidence of gun violence?

This law is not intended to take away anyone's right to lawfully own firearms or to put unnecessary burdens on those who buy and sell them. It is about acknowledging that firearms are first and foremost weapons and that gun violence is a serious public health issue in this state and in this country. It is about accepting that along with the right to own weapons comes the responsibility to ensure that those weapons don't reach the hands of criminals and the mentally ill.

The crisis of gun violence will not cure itself. Delay will inevitably cost lives. According to a January 2015 poll funded by Americans for Responsible Solutions, 87 percent of Oregonians support expanded background checks, and 83 percent of gun owners do. The League of Women Voters of Oregon strongly urges a yes vote on SB 941.

Sincerely,

Robin Wisdom
President

Marge Easley
Action Committee