

To: Chair Jeff Barker; Vice Chairs Williamson and Olson; Members of the House Judiciary Committee
From: Erin Greenawald, Domestic Violence Resource Prosecutor, Oregon Department of Justice
Re: Testimony in Support of SB 525B
Date: 6/1/2015

Chair Barker and members of the committee:

It is undisputed that the introduction of guns into a domestic violence relationship greatly increases the potential for lethality for victims (and perpetrators), as well as the police officers who often have to intervene in domestic violence situations. There is also new information demonstrating that a majority of the mass shootings in the United States are related to domestic or family violence. Furthermore, perpetrators of mass shootings (not related to domestic or family violence) often have a previous history of domestic violence.¹ In addition to lethal incidents involving domestic violence perpetrators and guns, it has been shown that abusers who possess firearms tend to inflict the most severe abuse on their victims.

The following statistics bear out the truth of these statements:

- Abused women are **five times** more likely to be killed by their abuser if the abuser owns a firearm.²
- Domestic violence assaults involving a gun are **twelve times** more likely to result in death than those involving other weapons or bodily force.³
- A perpetrator's prior threat or assault with a firearm results in **twenty times higher risk** of death in the context of an intimate partner relationship.⁴

Information about DV-related deaths in Oregon corroborates the national studies:

- DV-related homicides on average comprise 20% of all violent deaths in Oregon.⁵
- Sixty-plus percent of all DV-related homicides in Oregon are the result of a gunshot wound.⁶
- Nearly 75% of all homicide/suicides are DV-related. 85% (or more) involve the use of a firearm.⁷

¹ Shifman, Pamela and Tillet, Salamisha, *To Stop Violence, Start at Home*. New York Times Op-ed (February 2, 2015).

² Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al. Risk Factors for Femicide in Abusive Relationships. Results from a multisite Case Control Study, 93 Am. J. Pub. Health 1089, 1092 (July 2003).

³ Linda E. Saltzman, et al., Weapon Involvement and Injury Outcomes in Family and Intimate Assaults. 267 JAMA, 3043-3047 (1992).

⁴ Kellermann AL, Rivara FP, Rushforth NB, et al. Gun ownership as a risk factor for homicide in the home. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 1993;329(15):1084-1091.

⁵ Shen X., Millet L., "Homicides Related to Intimate Partner Violence in Oregon: A Seven Year Review," Oregon Department of Human Services (2010) Portland, Oregon.

⁶ Shen X., Millet L., "Homicide Trends and Characteristics in Oregon, 2014 Report," Oregon Health Authority, Portland, Oregon.

⁷ Shen X., Millet L., "Violent Deaths in Oregon: 2011," Oregon Health Authority, Portland, Oregon.

As stated above, it's not just domestic violence victims who are at risk from perpetrators with guns. Police officers and members of the public are in great danger of injury or death when identified DV offenders own, possess, or have access to firearms:

- From 1996-2009, fourteen percent of all officers killed on duty were responding to DV calls.⁸
- From 1996-2009, ninety-seven percent of officers killed on DV calls were murdered with firearms.⁹
- A study of every identifiable mass shooting (shooting in which four or more people were murdered) between January 2009 and July 2014 found that 57% of them involved the killing of a family member or a current or former intimate partner of the shooter.¹⁰

While the greatest perceptible cost of the combination of guns and domestic violence is the loss of life, we should also be very disturbed and concerned about the abuse inflicted by domestic violence perpetrators who own, possess, or have access to firearms. Studies have revealed that abusers who possess guns tend to inflict the most severe abuse on their partners.¹¹

Despite these sobering statistics, there is no Oregon law which mandates that domestic violence misdemeanants or people subject to qualifying Restraining Orders be dispossessed of firearms. **This gap in our laws puts Oregon law enforcement and prosecutors at a severe disadvantage when trying to hold these perpetrators accountable. This legal gap also poses a significant safety risk to domestic violence victims and our law enforcement.**

SB 525B would provide *local law enforcement* the authority that they currently do not have to appropriately investigate domestic violence misdemeanants and those persons subject to qualifying restraining orders who possess firearms. It would greatly improve the criminal justice system's ability to hold domestic violence offenders accountable and improve victim and public safety.

Thank you for your work on improving safety for domestic violence victims.

I urge you to support SB 525B.

Erin Greenawald

⁸ Police Chief Magazine: December, 2012.

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ Everytown for Gun Safety: Analysis of Recent Mass Shootings (July 2014).

¹¹ Jacquelyn C. Campbell et al., Risk Factors For Femicide in Abusive Relationships: Results From A Multi-Site Case Control Study, 93 Am. J. of Public Health 1089, 1092 (2003), abstract available at <http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/abstract/93/7/1089>; <http://jiv.sagepub.com/content/28/6/1143.abstract>