

From the desk
of Sen. Chuck Riley

Support Senate Bill 941

As a retired Army Intelligence Officer, I am trained to understand, analyze and explain threats. I have served in Iraq and many other overseas assignments - some of which are places where weapons have no restrictions whatsoever.

In June of 2012, I was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. My fellow Army Intelligence Officer, LTC Roy Tisdale, was shot and killed by a soldier facing criminal charges and likely had PTSD. The weapon used was not a military weapon, but a civilian weapon easily obtained in Fayetteville, NC without any checks whatsoever. A background check might have saved a highly decorated Army leader's life.

In the military, we all underwent background checks. The reason is twofold, one to keep out those unfit for service, for example criminals, and the second is to make sure that the individual won't misuse the firepower with which they are entrusted. We put a heavy emphasis on safety. Everyone is assigned a weapon and that weapon is kept in a vault. When we train with these weapons, it is done under the supervision of a group whose sole job is to watch the shooters at all times. If a weapon comes up missing, the unit is immediately locked down and the Military Police immediately start questioning the soldiers involved. This may sound severe to you, but when you've seen the carnage these weapons produce on your fellow soldiers, you accept it.

I am equally committed to protecting the Second Amendment rights I defended for 29 years as well as the safety of our fellow Americans. I have seen the danger of guns in the wrong hands and understand the desire to defend oneself. However, I also support healthy dose of American common sense: put people through a simple background check before they get a gun - just like I had to.

As a veteran and an Oregonian I urge you to support SB 941, which keeps guns out of the hands of criminals, the dangerously mentally ill, and domestic abusers by eliminating loopholes that allow anyone to get guns without a background check.

The evidence says that this approach works: In states that expanded background checks on handgun sales, there are 46% fewer gun homicides of women by intimate partners, 48% fewer firearm suicides, and 48% fewer law enforcement gun deaths.

Please stand with 88 percent of Oregonians and 82 percent of Oregon gun owners in supporting this important legislation.

Vote YES on SB 941 to close loopholes in our background checks system.

Lt. Col. Jeff Julum, US Army (Ret.)

3719 Dublin Ave Salem, OR