



March 13, 2017

The Honorable Floyd Prozanski  
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee  
900 Court St. NE, S-413  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**RE: SB 897 (Sen. Ringo [ret.] and the Senate Committee on Judiciary)**  
**POSITION: OPPOSE**  
**LOCATION: Senate Judiciary**

Dear Chairman Prozanski,

I write to you on behalf of the members and supporters of the Firearms Policy Coalition to extend our **opposition and condemnation of SB 897.**

We find that the mere introduction of this anti-civil-rights measure should be considered a teachable moment in how *not* to govern. Possibly introduced as a response to disagreeing with a jury's findings regarding a recent high profile event, SB 897 seeks to attack the 1st amendment in an angry outburst over the decision concluded by a seated jury per the 6th amendment.

Beyond being a tantrum masquerading as policy, SB 897 attempts to reframe our common language and heritage by placing the word "militia" next to the word "terrorist" and defining such as both protesting and at least one attendee lawfully carrying protected arms. This bill attempts to subvert the vernacular to associate those who founded our nation with those who would destroy it. Shameful.

*"To suppress free speech is a double wrong. It violates the rights of the hearer as well as those of the speaker."*

- Frederick Douglass

The fact that HB 897 attacks Americans by threatening a felony on those that have committed no serious or violent crime, creates a crime of shared guilt, and focuses only on those who are otherwise lawfully armed (regardless of anyone else in the party is aware of it) and those nearby ( who aren't armed), from a policy perspective is an unenforceable non-starter. Philosophically, this measure's true aim is to target speech, and that is unconscionable.

*"The Framers of the Constitution knew that free speech is the friend of change and revolution. But they also knew that it is always the deadliest enemy of tyranny."*

- Hugo Black

We watch many of our political leaders cheer when the oppressed protest and disobey; be it dissidents in China, or even when the minority party in Congress recently staged staged a sit-in protesting the lack of civilian disarmament measures being taken up on the floor.

It is difficult to imagine those same cheerleaders conceiving of creating felonies for the same behavior, but different speech. How frightening it is to wonder what the world would look like if this law existed in the 1960's....Civil rights marchers, diner sit-ins, campus sit-ins ... SB 897 would have them all be "terrorists" and imprisoned. This duplicity will not go unanswered.

*"Above all else, the First Amendment means that the government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its content."*

- Thurgood Marshall

Whether or not citizens that are the target of this law choose to avail themselves of other constitutional rights, such as carrying a firearm (or associate with those who do), as countless Americans have done through history, is completely irrelevant to the fact they are clearly targeted by this measure--with the intent to suppress and undermine the First Amendment.

*"The First Amendment is often inconvenient. But that is beside the point. Inconvenience does not absolve the government of its obligation to tolerate speech."*

- Anthony Kennedy

An attack on the First Amendment like SB 897 proposes, is an attack on every American and we proudly oppose this measure and any like it. We urge the committee to reject this measure.

In Freedom,



Philip Watson  
Rights Advocate

Cc: Oregon Senate