

Thank you. It's an honor to be here with all of you today. Thank you Chairman Prozanski and committee members for allowing me to speak here today.

My name is Paul Kemp. I am speaking here as a gun owner, hunter, founding board member of Gun Owners for Responsible Ownership, plus an I am on the advisory committee of the Oregon Coalition for Common Sense. I am here to be a voice for my sister Carla, and her late husband Steve Forsyth, who was shot in the back of the head and killed at the Clackamas Town Center Mall on December 11th, 2012, by a gunman armed with a Stag-15 rifle and 150 rounds of ammunition.

My brother in-law Steve was a man who left a huge imprint on the world and whose legacy and memories live on every day. Steve was a good man, a loving husband, a caring dad who made time to coach basketball and football.

Since my brother-in-law Steve was killed, I have been speaking out about the need to strengthen our gun laws to prevent other tragedies. I speak as someone who knows the very real and tragic consequences of a gun in wrong hands. I also speak as a gun owner and hunter who knows - like the majority of gun owners in this state – and respects the Second Amendment and knows that we can support common sense gun laws that prevent gun violence and respect the rights of law abiding gun owners.

Today, I am proud to stand here to support a bill that does just that. Senate Bill 797 will take a number of important steps to help make Oregon safer. Among those steps, this bill will close the “Charleston loophole,” which allows a gun sale to proceed without a completed background check, if three business days pass before the check can be finished. It’s exactly how the Charleston shooter got his gun and used it to take the lives of nine innocent church-goers in the summer of 2015.

As a gun owner, I’ve undergone a background check every time I’ve purchased a gun. I know that background checks are quick and easy. Most background checks are finished right on the spot in less than 5 minutes. But for the small percentage of buyers with complicated criminal histories, law enforcement needs enough time to ensure that these people are not prohibited from buying guns.

We know that because of stories like Reverend Sharon Risher’s – whose mother and two cousins were killed at Charleston AME this past June. I’ve had the honor to meet Reverend Sharon Risher. Her mother and eight other Americans might still be alive today if not for this flaw in the background checks system that allows gun sales to proceed with incomplete background checks after just three days.

Senate Bill 797 would fix this deadly flaw – and contains several other provisions to protect Oregon’s women and children and enforce our current gun laws – and will help save lives.

I ask that legislators think of the lives taken and forever altered by gun violence when they consider this bill. Please stand with us and support SB 797.