

My name is Rachel Prusak. I am a candidate for a seat in House District 37. I decided to run because as a nurse, I have cared for people in their most vulnerable conditions. As a result, I have become an advocate on healthcare issues.

Today, I am here as a survivor of an abusive dating partner. I escaped alive and am here to give voice to those that need to escape, and to prevent another woman from a traumatic, potentially deadly experience. I am here for the one in three American women who, research tells us, will be impacted by domestic violence, and those who are five times more likely to die because a gun is involved.

When I was 16, a high school football player turned his attention to me. We began dating. Within a few months, the attention evolved into controlling behaviors laced with violent undertones. His temper grew short, violent threats peaked, and he became increasingly aggressive.

Thankfully, my parents helped me secure a restraining order. One day, he came to my house, armed with a gun that he flashed at me, demanding that I walk with him, so we could talk things out. He pointed the gun at my side as we walked. I was able to placate him and he let me go. He was arrested for violating the restraining order on that occasion and several others.

Soon after, I left my hometown for college and escaped. He continued to show up unannounced at the home of my parents, and the worry never left. To deal with the trauma, I turned to religion. I truly felt like my life was at constant risk. When I later learned that he had died, I experienced an indescribable relief, knowing that I would be safe.

HB 4145 closes a critical loophole in our current background check law. It will make sure that the law prohibits both abusive dating partners and abusive domestic partners who are under restraining orders from passing a background check. It's especially important since data shows that abusive dating partners kill women at the same rate as do abusive husbands. This law will also alert law enforcement that an abuser has tried to get a gun, providing law enforcement with the information and opportunity to investigate.

Every day, I realize how lucky I was to escape alive. Please vote yes on HB 4145, and help save the lives of more Oregon women and children.

Rachel Prusak