

To whom it may concern,

Although Senate Bill 978 as it currently reads does little more than direct the Oregon State Police to conduct research on unlawful firearm transfers, the reality is that this piece of legislation will inevitably be subject to various amendments by misguided politicians seeking to hamper the public's access to self-defense. There are several potential riders to this bill that offer nothing more than barriers to an individual's ability to defend his/herself, while doing virtually nothing to substantially reduce the threat of self harm, both intentional and accidental, or the presence of dangerous criminals that will remain a threat to public safety regardless of whether they have access to firearms. The most egregious of these would-be sanctions against law-abiding citizens come in the form of a cookie-cutter firearms storage policy that would greatly inhibit one's ability to readily produce firearms in a home-defense scenario and the expansion of so-called "Gun-Free Zones" that, without a viable means of enforcement, create soft targets for those seeking to do harm on a large scale.

Securing legally owned firearms to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands--unsupervised children, the mentally ailed, criminals, etc--is considered by many to be an effective means of reducing overall levels of personal injury and death related to accidental shootings, suicides, and homicides; however, when one takes into consideration publicly available information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Justice, it is apparent that there are more immediate threats to public safety than unsecured legal firearms. The overwhelming majority of suicides involving firearms are carried out by the lawful owner of the firearm, and accidental discharges result in far fewer deaths and injuries than those incurred by violent crime, even cases of violent crime that do not involve firearms. As for homicides and attempted homicides, roughly 85% of the illegally obtained firearms used in the commission of such crimes originate not from thefts, but from unlawful transfers such as black market sales and straw purchases, the very subject of study by the Oregon State Police as directed by the current language of Senate Bill 978.

Mandating under penalty of imprisonment that all firearms be stored in a locking container, regardless of whether the owner resides with children or the mentally ailed, MIGHT POSSIBLY reduce the number of stolen firearms, and in homes shared with children or the mentally ailed, it MIGHT POSSIBLY reduce the number of accidental discharges and gunshot suicides involving wrongfully acquired firearms. But, in either case, what such a mandate WILL UNDOUBTEDLY do is increase the amount of time needed to ready a firearm in defense during a home invasion, leading to more loss of life and personal injury. My father served as an Oregon State Trooper for 21 years from 1983 to 2004. Not once in that period did he or any of his colleagues respond to a home invasion fast enough to protect the occupants from harm, nor had any law enforcement officer he had ever met during his career.

Regarding the expansion of "Gun-Free Zones," the simple fact exists that unless there are metal detectors, pat-downs, and armed security personnel present to detect firearms in such an area, then there are no means to enforce such policies. Instead, "Gun-Free Zones" only disarm those willing to respect them, something of no deterrence to would-be murderers, and create a huge advantage for any individual that brings in a firearm undetected. Laws are not made because criminals are expected to follow them, they are made to protect those that obey them through their enforcement; an unenforceable law protects no one.

The risk of amendments such as those stated above being applied to Senate Bill 978 makes this legislation a greater threat to public safety than it would seek to eliminate. Because of this, any benefits gained from the research conducted would be outweighed by its harm. Senators supporting this bill will

advance the ball in a game of inches towards an ultimate goal of public disarmament and the abolition of self defense; they will not be getting my vote.

Thank you for your time,

Martin Now