

Dear Honorable Senators:

to this committee I write in all earnest, hoping that my words, my ideas, will be looked upon as being most sincere. I do not lay claim that all of them are the best, but I certainly believe they are better than what has been proposed in SB 978. I'm a Portland native who grew up across from Hood River, OR, and who frequents Oregon on a regular basis for different firearms related activities. I hold my right to bear arms as a sacred one. I think that serious consideration must be had before passing laws that might infringe on that right. This bill, if it were what the title actually suggests, would be great.

As it reads: ***Directs Department of State Police to conduct study on reporting of attempted unlawful firearm transfers and present report on findings to interim committees of Legislative Assembly related to judiciary on or before September 15, 2020.***

That sounds like a very reasonable bill at first glance. Unfortunately, not all is as it appears. This bill was in fact used as a placeholder. A placeholder is a bill, or a tactic, that is used to hide the true intent of a bill so that the opposition has little time to react to a horde of amendments that the bill's supporters intend to insert, and to give the bill's supporters time to get possible amendments written and inserted.

These proposed amendments exceed any thing like "common sense" gun reform.

For instance, Section 1 would make it illegal to sell a gun to someone who is legally an adult, but not over 21, and it makes an exception to Oregon law which forbids age discrimination. Besides my believing that if a person is old enough to die for his/her country, they are also old enough to defend themselves with a firearm. Wouldn't you agree? I also believe it's maybe just a little hypocritical to make a law that supports equality, but then create another law that goes against that belief by allowing gun dealers to discriminate based on age. That's purely disingenuous.

Section 7 would have anyone transferring a firearm utilize a trigger lock. Tell me, is there some evidence that this committee has to support this type of law? Have there been a rash of accidental shootings because when a gun was transferred it had no lock? Supporters of these amendments expect to hold the transferer accountable for any type of shooting for up to two years after the transfer if the person who transferred the firearm cannot prove that they indeed had one engaged on that firearm at the time of transfer? That doesn't sound unreasonable to anyone on this committee? Shouldn't the burden of preponderance of evidence be on the plaintiff, i.e. the state or local A.G.? This is the type of unreasonable expectation that makes this bill look like it was put together by people with animosity towards gun owners rather than people truly concerned with public safety in relation to gun violence.

Section 10 reads that, "No later than January 1, 2020, the Oregon Health Authority shall adopt rules establishing the minimum specifications for trigger locks, cable locks and containers equipped with tamper resistant locks required by sections 6 and 7 of this 2019 Act."

If I'm to understand this right, a political party will put in place officials who are not experts in gun storage, but rather who are loyal to a particular ideology, and who can greatly affect a person's ability to access a firearm when it matters most? How is it that the Oregon Health Authority would have any expert knowledge about gun storage or a person's Second Amendment right, two things that must be weighed evenly so as to not step on the rights of gun owners while maintaining a safe environment for all? How is this a fair proposal?

And to conclude my written testimony, I am all for gun safety. I would sit down with anyone from any party, any religion, any ideology, and I would listen and work with them to develop a program that puts in place legislative, as well as engineered safeguards to protect the lives of all citizens, especially those within our most vulnerable institutions and public spaces. It would have to be a program that utilizes the media to promote real gun safety, not gun control, for there is a difference, and it would have to include gun owners who you perhaps are most disagreeable with. There are many things that the states of Oregon and Washington could do to prevent gun violence. So, why not attempt those first, before putting unreasonable burdens and expectations on gun owners and holding them accountable for things they ought not be held responsible for in such a strict degree? It's time that laws were made utilizing statistical facts and that brought people from both sides of the discussion together. If we are to condemn others for being divisive, then we must stop being divisive too.

Best regards,  
Kevin Herman

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