

May 10, 2019

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
900 Court St. NE, S-413
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2013 – a matter of life and death

Dear Chair Prozanski and Committee Members:

Every year an average of 600 women in America are shot to death by their partners.¹ One-third die within 30 days after obtaining a court protective order.² Not infrequently abusers shoot several family members before turning the gun on themselves. Far more people die in domestic violence shootings than in the mass shootings we read so much about.

The Legislature tried to reduce this carnage by passing SB 525 in 2015. The bill prohibited the subjects of certain family abuse protection orders from possessing firearms for up to a year, but enforcement has been spotty to non-existent. In Benton County, for example, I found no evidence that any firearms were surrendered in compliance with 66 protection orders that explicitly prohibited firearm possession.³

A few counties have adopted interagency protocols to enforce firearm prohibitions. But even in those counties, enforcement can be too slow to protect victims when they are most vulnerable—the first 30 days after an order has been served on the respondent.

HB 2013 provides the explicit guidance, deadlines, and standards to close the gap between the Legislature’s aspirations and effective enforcement.

For your constituents and their children, please pass HB 2013.

Respectfully,

PFSandrock

Pete Sandrock
Benton County District Attorney (1977-1999)

¹ Uniform Crime Reporting Program: Supplementary Homicide Reports (SHR), 2012-2016. Washington, DC: Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

² When Abusers are Most Lethal, NY Times, December 19, 2017.

³ I reviewed 97 of the 196 protection orders issued in Benton County between June 1, 2016 and June 1, 2018. Sixty-six of the 97 orders prohibited respondents from possessing firearms. I found no evidence that any were enforced. To its credit, Benton County has excellent procedures for enforcing Extreme Risk (“Red Flag”) orders and appears on its way to adopt similar procedures for family abuse protection orders.