



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 101-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 21, 2021

To: House Committee on Rules
Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, Chair

Re: **SB 554** - Authorizes local government regulation of firearms in public buildings -
Support

The League of Women Voters of Oregon strongly supports the active role of government in gun violence prevention. We believe SB 554 is an important step forward in state law, because it expands the ability of cities, counties, metropolitan service districts, port operating commercial airport, school districts, colleges, or universities to establish gun-free zones in public buildings. While Oregon currently prohibits any person from intentionally possessing a loaded or unloaded firearm while in or on a public building, an exception is made for concealed handgun licensees. This bill allows local jurisdictions to remove that exemption, giving them additional power to maintain public safety as they so choose.

Why is this change needed? First, obtaining a CHL in Oregon is a fairly easy process, and today 1 in 16 Oregonians has one—approximately 257,000 people. An applicant must be a citizen or resident alien over 21, pass a State Police background check, have no major legal or mental health flags on his/her record, and demonstrate competence with a handgun. There are a number of choices for demonstrating this competence, but the most expedient way is to successfully complete an online training course administered by the Oregon State Sheriff's Association. Along with 25 other states, Oregon does not require any live fire training to obtain a CHL, making it possible to receive one without ever touching an actual firearm.

Secondly, the proliferation of handguns in our society, the increase in the number of mass shootings in our society, and the need for local law enforcement agencies to deal with the specific security requirements of their communities makes this change to Oregon's gun laws an important one. In our opinion, a CHL should not automatically convey an absolute right to carry a handgun wherever you wish, just as the Second Amendment, according to Justice Scalia's words in the 2008 D.C. vs Heller decision, does not bestow an unlimited right to "keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose." We emphasize that this bill is not a blanket prohibition; it gives local jurisdictions the power to decide the level of firearm restriction it wants to impose.

The League urges a do pass recommendation for SB 554. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca L. Gladstone".

Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marge Easley".

Marge Easley
LWVOR Gun Safety Portfolio