

Testimony in support of SB 554

Chair of the House Rules Committee Rep Smith Warner
Vice Chair Rep Drazen
Vice Chair Rep Holvey
Fellow Committee Members

I write today in support of SB 554 A

The only person who feels safe is the person holding the gun – the rest of us are human targets.

The United States has more guns than people.

Our State and our Country operate as a Democratic Republic which requires dialogue to come to agreement for how our society should live. We can participate in that dialogue by coming to the Capitol (before Covid-19) to attend and comment at hearings. We can attend work sessions and floor sessions to watch and learn. With the current rise in domestic terrorism and opinion that 'might makes right' our system of government is fraying. Our Capitol has no security system to check for weapons coming into the building. As the current environment of some people encourages carrying weapons, I'm not sure as a citizen that I feel safe coming to the Capitol to participate in our democracy. I'm sure many people who work in the Capitol are also concerned. Carrying firearms and weapons into our public buildings needs to be outlawed and heavily penalized.

In late Fall of 2016, a group of local Salem scientists got together to plan our next annual 'Salem March for Science' event which we would be coordinating with the national movement to hold events around the country and across the world on April 14, 2017 in multiple cities. We coordinated with science groups, organized booths, put out requests for science exhibits and activities from around the region, contacted speakers, obtained the required permits, attained a sound system, canopies and chairs, made plans for rain and all the things that go into event planning. 2 weeks before Salem 'March for Science' we were notified that a gun rights Facebook group proclaimed that all gun owners should all go to their State Capitols to rally on their Capitol steps on April 14th at noon. We had our permit for the Capitol steps and area out in front plus electrical power. We had notified the Salem Police about our march and had permits. We contacted the State Patrol and Salem Police who then negotiated with the gun owners group and got them to agree to hold their activity in Wilson Park at the War Memorial. Salem Police and the State Patrol brought out bicycle, mounted patrol, motorcycle, patrol car, riot gear clad officers (all of which cost money) to stand between the gun owners and the science people. The gun owner group was very bad at communication so large numbers of gun carrying guys came walking into our booth and exhibit area sort of puzzled by what they were not expecting to see. We had already learned from many families that after they heard about the gun owners event on the steps that they chose not bring their children to come to the Science March. Our attendance declined 60% from the year before. Funny how parents with their children don't feel safe being around people carrying guns. It's also a scary situation to have to give directions to a gun carrying person on where they can find their group at the Park. I don't want to have to do that again. Outlaw people carrying guns in public buildings, schools, parks – anyplace where there are gatherings of human targets.

The talking point that you need to have 'good guys with guns' is a myth. In any shooting situation the first person shot by law enforcement is the guy with the gun – they don't have time for questioning.

Guns are not problem solvers. We have more problems because of them.