

Submitter: Don Iler
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB4131

Dear House Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing you because of my opposition to HB 4131. Chemical warfare agents should not be used on Oregon's streets, whether to quell a riot or any other kind of civil disturbance. These chemical agents, such as tear gas, are banned by the Geneva Convention for use in combat, yet Portland Police Bureau and other law enforcement agencies saw fit to use them indiscriminately, night after night, both in commercial and residential neighborhoods. Why would Oregon allow the use of a poisonous substance against its own citizens that the military is prohibited to use in combat? As a veteran, I was ashamed to see local police gas citizens with chemical warfare agents night after night, in quantities so large that it still lingered in the air the morning after when I was driving the bus through downtown Portland. There are other means police have at their disposal to restore order to unruly situations, yet time after time they resorted to poison gas to try to empty the streets.

In addition to the protestors who were gassed indiscriminately, children in houses trying to sleep, transit workers driving street cars and buses were gassed, workers trying to serve our community were gassed. Tear gas is a lazy, poisonous, and ineffective way to control a crowd, because police can't control where the wind blows. Much like world leaders decided after World War I that chemical warfare agents were ineffective on the battlefield and caused more harm than good, Oregon should take a stand now and say that tear gas and other chemical warfare agents have no business in police arsenals or on our streets.

Thank you,

Don Iler