

February 23, 2022

I am a senior citizen who lives in Beaverton. In 2020, I watched hours and hours of live stream video showing the protests in Portland from various points of view. Every single time, the protesters (most of them very young people) were at the worst mischievous (moving fences around, painting court and police buildings with graffiti, throwing dildos, pig food, and water bottles at cops). Most of the time, they listened to speeches and music, marched, chanted, ate, and danced.

But regardless of how peaceful the protests against police brutality were, they were almost always met with police violence. Police would charge out of their precinct buildings and attack: shooting so-called "less than lethal" weapons directly at protestors (including at their heads); pulling their masks down and spraying pepper in their eyes and mouths; beating them with batons and fists; throwing them onto concrete curbs, including people following their specific orders to disperse, with enough force to break bones including spines and skulls; sending many to the hospital.

The cops filled the streets of Portland with tear gas (a weapon banned for use against civilians of other countries) and other chemical weapons, making people cough (during a pandemic of a virus spread by respiratory emissions), cry, vomit, etc. Many of the victims of tear gas exposure, including nearby residents in their own homes, people who happened to be driving by, children, and babies in their cribs, are still experiencing long-term major physical and mental health problems to this day. The trees in downtown Portland have yet to recover from the environmental damage caused by caustic chemicals filling the air.

The Portland Police used tear gas even when ordered not to do so by the mayor/police commissioner, the U.S. Department of Justice, courts of law, and the state legislature. When told they could only use tear gas to control rioting, they simply declared a riot and/or "unlawful assembly" every single night.

Police refused to say who declared those assemblies unlawful and for what reason. Often during those "declarations" there was no illegal activity of any kind in progress and it was only too obvious to objective observers that "unlawful assembly" was being used as an excuse to attack protesters.

House Bill 4131 is an egregious rollback of the little protection offered by previous legislation, sponsored by legislators representing rural areas that have no experience with the harm that these chemicals and weapons cause and a gubernatorial candidate looking to score political points.

There is no excuse, ever, to use these weapons of war against citizens of the U.S.,

Oregon, and Portland. Police have other resources, including just staying inside and avoiding confrontations. (It's important to note that on those few nights the police stayed inside there was no violence, because the only rioting that's been done in Portland has been police and federal agents brutally attacking protesters who were practicing their First Amendment right "to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" and white supremacists from out of state assaulting local citizens standing up against fascism.)

The state legislature, to quote Martin Luther King Jr., "must see that riots do not develop out of thin air. Certain conditions continue to exist in our society which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots. But in the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard."

Giving police more weapons, funding, and the ability to kill, hospitalize, and arrest more people will not quell any riots. Those actions just ensure authoritarian rule and eliminate any pretense that we live in a free society. If the legislature wants to stop people who live in Portland from rioting, *listen* to what they are saying. Take action to address their very real concerns about police brutality, housing inequality, wage theft, food insecurity, etc.

In the meantime, please kill House Bill 4131 for the protection of everyone who lives in the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

F.I. Goldhaber
Beaverton