

Submitter: Benjamin Roche
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4145
Chair and Members of the Committee,

I urge you to stop passing laws that feel like action but function like constitutional quicksand.

Every time this legislature advances another firearm restriction that collides with the Constitution, taxpayers get handed the bill. Not criminals. Not activists. Taxpayers. Millions in legal fees, court costs, and settlements, defending laws that were predictably challenged the moment the ink dried.

We have seen this pattern over and over: pass a sweeping restriction, claim it will make people safer, then spend years in court while enforcement is blocked and public trust erodes.

And here's the hard truth no one seems eager to say out loud:

There is no clear, measurable evidence that permit schemes, magazine bans, or layered purchase barriers reduce violent crime in Oregon. Criminals, by definition, do not comply with permitting processes. The only people navigating these bureaucratic mazes are the law-abiding ones, the very people least likely to misuse a firearm.

Meanwhile, what is certain?

Costs to defend these laws go up
Court losses pile up
Law enforcement resources get diverted
And citizens' rights get chipped away piece by piece

Let's be clear about the principle at stake.

Rights are not permissions from the government.
The Constitution does not say, "shall not be infringed unless a fee is paid, a class is taken, a database entry is approved, and a permit is issued."

No other constitutional right requires a permit to exercise its core function. You don't apply for a license to publish an opinion, attend church, or demand due process. Turning rights into licensed activities flips the relationship between citizen and state upside down.

Safety matters. Crime matters. But laws that burden the compliant while ignoring the criminal are not safety policy. Stop bad legislation that is nothing more than symbolic politics wrapped in legal risk.

You have a responsibility not just to “do something,” but to do something constitutional, effective, and defensible.

More laws that courts are likely to strike down do not make Oregon safer. They make Oregon poorer, more divided, and less free.