

Submitter: Christina Buehler
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4145

There is something fundamentally wrong with the idea that a constitutional right can be priced out of reach.

House Bill 4145 increases fees, extends delays, and adds layers of cost to something that is not supposed to belong to the wealthy or well-connected. The right to keep and bear arms does not say “for those who can afford it.” It does not say “for those who can wait months.” It belongs to every law-abiding citizen — equally.

For a single mother working two jobs in rural Oregon, an increased permit fee is not an abstract policy decision. It is groceries. It is gas to get to work. It is a power bill. When you add training costs, travel costs, fingerprinting fees, background check charges, and now higher permit fees — what you are really doing is building a financial wall.

And financial walls always fall hardest on the working class. If someone lives in a remote area where law enforcement response times can stretch long beyond what is safe, self-defense is not theoretical. It is practical. It is immediate. It is deeply personal. But HB 4145 stretches the permit process from 30 days to 60 days. Sixty days is not just paperwork — it is two months of vulnerability.

Rights delayed are rights denied. We would never tolerate a 60-day delay to speak freely, publish a newspaper, or attend church. We would never accept a sliding scale fee to vote. Yet here we are, increasing the cost and waiting period for a constitutional protection that many Oregonians rely on for their safety.

This bill creates a system where wealth determines access. The Constitution was written to protect the people — especially those without power. Especially those without influence. Especially those without money. When access to a right depends on disposable income, it stops being a right and starts being a privilege.

And constitutional rights are not privileges reserved for the financially comfortable. If we truly believe in equal protection under the law, then we cannot support policies that disproportionately burden working families, rural residents, seniors on fixed incomes, or anyone already struggling to make ends meet.

Safety should never be reserved for those who can afford the entry fee. HB 4145 moves Oregon closer to a system where basic constitutional protections come with a price tag. And that is something we should all be deeply concerned about.