

**Paul L Evans**  
**STATE REPRESENTATIVE**  
**DISTRICT 20**



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

May 4, 2015

**Representative Evans (D-Monmouth) Public Statement Re: Senate Bill 941-A**

Earlier today I voted in support of Senate Bill 941-A.

This was a difficult vote: it was a bill I did not propose, including a few provisions I would not choose, and a vote that has taken on associations with actions and meaning absent from the actual text. Senate Bill 941-A is an imperfect instrument. And yet, after weighing this policy within context—as your state representative—I voted in favor of a measure that will undoubtedly make it at least a little harder for felons to get a weapon: I voted for a bill that may prevent a catastrophic event and the loss of life. This is my duty to our families and the larger community. I believe it is always necessary to lessen the heartbreak of domestic violence and tragedy caused by firearms.

Let us begin with the facts. Senate Bill 941-A does not create a registry. It provides exemptions for sales and non-sales transfers for family members. In fact, over the past week, I have been working with leadership to secure adjustments to language that will clarify legal non-sales transfers that should minimize any unintended consequences for law-abiding citizens. The bill provides for temporary non-sales transfers expressly including non-relatives for the purposes of hunting, fishing, and target shooting. It provides for emergency transfers. It does not put a constraint upon personal ownership of firearms, nor does it impose any restrictions upon the purchase or sales of ammunition. It keeps firearms out of the hands of those that have been sent into mental health treatment programs by a judge; and only by a judge. This bill does not infringe upon the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment under any legal interpretation that can be found in case law.

Senate Bill 941-A requires people that sell firearms privately to do so by the same rules as everyone else, period. It is in fact, what the majority of Oregonians already thought was the law.

Though I would have preferred a few more adjustments to the bill, I could not in good conscience vote against the bill given the agreements made. I know that any ballot measure would be far less flexible and truly believe the compromises that have been made are the best deal possible given the circumstances. This bill seeks to lessen the ability of firearms for those that should not have them and it will do that. However, I will continue to press for an expressed protection for non-sales transfers, a tax credit or deduction for background checks, and a more technologically sophisticated tool for routine background checks over the long-term. Universal background checks for firearms sales may prove to be an important step toward a more peaceful society. However, we must be open-eyed about the real work that remains.

Laws alone do not, cannot, and will not, make our streets safer—or our communities more secure. We must invest in mental health care; we must invest in early intervention for children and teens; we must work to improve our justice structures and systems—violent offenders cannot be allowed to reenter our society without significant oversight and preparation; we must remedy the situation at its source. And we need to recognize now that the law in and of itself can or will transform basic human behavior. Some people will always want to harm other people. And violent people will always seek out violence for its sake.

In the final analysis, this bill is neither the panacea nor an infringement upon 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights. It is an inconvenience at worst—for law abiding citizens. And it is an inconvenience that may save a few lives. And, it is for that possibility: the opportunity to save the life of one child—one family—that I put the needs of the district ahead of personal considerations.

This past weekend I was reminded of the power of Romans 14:13. This verse reminds me of the importance of remembering the responsibilities of leadership as well as its price. Senate Bill 941-A will not fix all things, but it will remedy some things and for that we must try. Please let me know if you have any questions about this or any other piece of legislation. Thank you for your interest—I hope we continue working together for a better, stronger Oregon.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Paul L. Evans". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Paul L. Evans  
Oregon House of Representatives  
District 20