

If you are not a felon or a person who sells guns to felons, you should support SB 1551. It will limit felons' easy access to guns by closing the remaining loophole in Oregon's successful background check law for gun purchases.

Oregon passed its first background check law in 1989. It was limited to gun transfers that occurred through a gun dealer. Voters added gun shows in 2000 when they passed a ballot measure. Since then, all sales and transfers of guns at gun shows – including transfers between private individuals at gun shows – require a background check on individuals receiving the guns to confirm they are not felons.

When someone passes the background check without any issues, Oregon State Police destroy the collected information within 10 days of approval. Information is only kept longer – up to five years – if a felon fails the background check or if someone passes, but has a flagged issue that held up their approval (i.e., an out of state conviction). For all approvals, including those delayed and then approved, there is a 99.3 percent purge of information. The other 0.7 percent is not immediately purged because they are retained for up to five years to expedite future purchases.

The failure to require background checks on guns being transferred between individuals outside of a gun show has created a huge loophole that allows felons easy access to firearms. This loophole allows felons to bypass background checks. Recent polls continue to show that the vast majority of Oregonians (80 percent) favor universal background checks for all gun transfers. Clearly, Oregonians do not want felons to have easy access to guns, and it's time to close this remaining loophole.

According to the Oregon State Police, in 2012 more than a quarter of a million guns were lawfully transferred in Oregon – 256,988. That same year, 2,378 gun transfers were denied because the buyer failed the criminal background check. In 2013, OSP approved 261,128 transfers and denied 2,215 due to felony convictions. That means each month in Oregon, an average of 190 felons are denied access to guns because of background checks, while more than 21,000 lawful transfers are completed.

Unfortunately, some opponents continue to spread false and misleading information about the bill. SB 1551 is not a registration bill. The bill only expands the existing background check law to cover all private transfers, not just those that occur at gun shows; it establishes a family exception, sanctions, and it provides immunity to retail stores who run a lawful background check for private transfers. That's it.

Instead of relying on what anyone tells you, please read the bill for yourself at: <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2014R1/Measures/Text/SB1551/Introduced>. When you read the bill, you will see the new proposed amendments (in bold text) inserted into the existing statute (regular text). Many of the arguments that have been raised against the amendments are actually arguments against the existing law that has been in place for 24 years!

Some opponents question the need for the background checks to include specific information (such as make, model and serial number) about the actual gun being transferred. That information is used to determine if the gun being transferred is stolen. Hundreds of stolen guns have been recovered through this process.

The opponents also claim a person will not be able to loan their gun to another person without first running a background check. That is wrong. As stated in the bill, background checks would only be necessary when a firearm is sold, leased or gifted to an individual who is not a family member. We will still be able to loan our guns to friends and family members without running a background check. We can continue to handle, use and possess each other's guns while hunting or at a shooting range without running a background check.

I have owned guns for over 40 years and I support Oregon's background check law. I understand some felons will still gain access to guns through illegal means, but I also know that the law has denied about 190 felons per month easy access to guns over the past two years. Also, knowing that my sister's murderer is a felon, I want to take every reasonable step to deny him and other murderers, gang members, violent sex offenders and fugitives from having access – let alone easy access – to guns. It's time to close the loophole. It is time to deny felons easy access to guns.

Floyd Prozanski  
Oregon State Senator – District 4  
(includes parts of Douglas and Lane counties)