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Sweeping Gun Restrictions Under SB 243 Will Not Reduce Gun Deaths

SALEM, Ore. – Senate Republicans are pushing back against the [proposed amendment to Senate Bill 243](#), arguing it does nothing to address the real drivers of gun deaths while attacking the constitutionally protected rights of responsible gun owners.

Between 2019 and 2023, Oregon recorded **3,125** firearm-related deaths, **77%** of which were suicides. At the same time, Oregon ranks among the worst states for mental health treatment access despite having one of the highest rates of mental illness. Rather than tackling these core issues, SB 243 imposes more restrictions that will do little to stop crime or reduce suicides.

Adding to the concerns, the process has been an abuse of power. A 23-page amendment with sweeping new gun control measures was dropped just one day before the public hearing, replacing what was originally a half-page study bill. This last-minute maneuver denies Oregonians the transparency and input they deserve, and it's a growing problem.

"This is no way to govern. Dropping a massive gun control amendment at the last minute, without public scrutiny, is an insult to Oregonians," said **Senate Republican Leader Daniel Bonham (R-The Dalles)**. "On top of that, this bill punishes law-abiding citizens while ignoring the reality that most gun deaths in Oregon are suicides, not homicides. Instead of ineffective restrictions, we should be addressing the root causes—mental health and violent crime."

The amendment to SB 243 will:

- Strip 18-to-20-year-olds of their constitutional right to buy firearms, relegating them to a short list of outdated long guns while banning handguns entirely, leaving young adults defenseless and shattering rural traditions.
- Impose a punitive three-day waiting period on firearm purchases, stalling law-abiding citizens desperate for protection—especially victims of abuse or stalking—while piling pointless delays on those already vetted by Oregon's strict background checks.
- Ban unloaded firearms from vast swathes of public buildings, and vague "adjacent grounds", disarming permit holders, creating soft targets for shooters, and sowing confusion with unclear boundaries.

“Oregon already has some of the strictest gun laws in the country, yet gun deaths continue to rise,” said **Senator Kim Thatcher (R-Keizer)**, vice-chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee. “Meanwhile, states like New Hampshire, with far fewer gun restrictions, experience lower firearm deaths per capita. The data is clear: this bill won’t make Oregon safer.”

“This is yet another example of urban legislators forcing restrictions on law-abiding gun owners in rural Oregon while ignoring the real problems behind gun deaths,” said **Senator David Brock Smith (R-Port Orford)**, a member of the Joint Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee. “Oregon’s mental health crisis is being ignored in favor of ineffective gun control policies that won’t stop criminals or reduce suicides.”

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