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OREGON SENATE REPUBLICANS

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 25, 2021

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Democrats Advance Agenda to Make Life More Dangerous While Cracking Down on Oregonians' Self-Defense Rights

Republicans fight back with common-sense public safety measures

SALEM, Ore. – In the wake of tragic shootings, Democrats advanced feel-good legislation that threatens the safety of communities by rolling back Oregonians' self-defense rights.

Amid rising violent crime, Democrats voted to advance SB 554, which would strip responsible Oregonians from defending themselves in certain settings. The move comes the [same week](#) Democrats entertained legislation that would let violent offenders off with lighter punishments.

“Let me be clear, this radical policy does absolutely nothing to solve gun violence or make communities safer,” Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod (R-Lyons) said. “It will make it worse. Democrats have brought forth zero evidence that this will do anything except criminalize responsible Oregonians. At a time when Democrats are advancing ideas that would embolden violent criminals and hamstring police, to simultaneously strip responsible Oregonians of self-defense rights is unconscionable.”

Democrats Restrict the Right of Self Defense for Most Vulnerable to Violent Crime

After Portland politicians defunded the Gun Violence Reduction Unit, shootings have [skyrocketed](#) by 2,000%. Firearm homicides have reached [record levels](#), none of which have been alleged to have been committed by a CHL holder. Portland-area residents have [rushed](#) to get a concealed carry license to protect their families and neighbors.

“SB 554 will make it harder for communities who have to bear the brunt of bad public safety policy to exercise their right to defend themselves,” Senator Tim Knopp (R-Bend) said. “It also increases the cost to access that right. That will only serve to price low-income Oregonians out of defending themselves and their families.”

Democrats Reject Republicans' Pro-Democracy, Evidence-Based Approaches

Republicans offered alternatives that would have given Oregonians and policymakers insights on how to bolster public safety. A 2020 Rand Corporation [study](#) found no existing data adequately evaluated the relationship between “gun-free zones” and mass shootings.

Republicans' Minority Report commissioned a study to gather valuable data about gun violence in public spaces. Democrats rejected this evidence-based approach.

Republicans also offered Oregon voters the chance to weigh in on this divisive legislation by proposing an amendment send it directly to voters. Democrats rejected this pro-democracy proposal.

SB 554 restricts where Oregonians can defend themselves from violent attacks but fails to mandate that local jurisdictions who adopt these restrictions provide other safety measures. Republicans requested information about the cost of implementing metal detectors and hiring security. Again, Democrats blocked this prudent public safety step.

“Republicans proposed common-sense, data-driven approaches that would protect Oregonians’ constitutional rights and enhance public safety,” Senator Lynn Findley (R-Vale) said. “It is unbelievable that Democrats weren’t interested in the facts and instead, are clearly determined to pursue a political agenda at the expense of our rights. The data we have make it clear that CHL holders are some of the most law-abiding citizens in our state. This bill will simply single them out at no benefit to public safety.”

Data [suggest](#) that less than one-hundredth of one percent (.0074%) of Oregonians with CHLs commit felonies. In Texas and Florida – two states that track concealed carry license data in detail – permit holders commit crimes at 1/6th the rate of police officers, a group that already very law-abiding.

CHL holders also stop crime. According to the FBI, 3.2% of active shooter situations are [stopped](#) by someone with a CHL. Other research suggests that they [stop](#) up to 16.5% of mass murder situations.

Democrats Reject Constitution, Move Toward Mass Incarceration

While Democrats were rejecting common-sense Republican proposals, they also voted against the United States and Oregon Constitution. The Republican Minority Report included clauses affirming Oregonians’ Constitutional right to defend themselves. SB 554 also makes responsible Oregonians criminals overnight with punishments of \$125,000 and up to 5 years in prison. These are the same monetary fines as rape in the third degree and some child pornography charges.

“Our society is beginning to embrace a principle of rehabilitation for non-violent offenders to decrease prison populations,” Senator Girod (R-Lyons) said. “This bill flies in the face of that. The stiff penalties it imposes are completely contrary to that principle.”

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