

Testimony for the Oregon Senate Judiciary Committee, February 8, 2012

On concealed handguns on school grounds

Senate Bill 1550 would further restrict where concealed handgun license holders can lawfully carry. I ask you, what problem does this purported solution aim to address? What problems have concealed carry holders created on school grounds, or anywhere else in Oregon? Has any evidence been presented here illustrating that there is a problem in need of a solution?

I and many others including law enforcement officers with decades of experience on this issue contend that it is a naïve notion that this would in any way enhance public safety. Your colleague Representative Barker has stated repeatedly that his experience as a retired police lieutenant is that CHL holders present *no threat to anyone's* safety. To the contrary, CHL holders have repeatedly been shown to be among the most law abiding members of society and in possession of the soundest judgment and they can, and do, *save* lives. I have provided several examples in my electronically submitted testimony.

The assertion of SB1550 is that this will increase public safety but historical facts demonstrate that this is not the case. Columbine High School and Virginia Tech were both so-called "gun-free zones" and I ask you, did it work? Let us exercise common sense for a moment: someone intent on committing murder on a school grounds or other public building is not going to be hampered by thoughts of retribution for violating a "gun-free zone." Virginia's Attorney General recently stated that gun-ban policies "are ineffectual because persons who wish to perpetrate violence will ignore them, and that the net effect of such policies is to leave defenseless the law-abiding citizens who follow these policies."

You can not, as legislators, in any way stop people from entering public places armed and with criminal intent by declaring any place a gun free zone. You can, however, minimize the *damage* of such a situation and you can do so by leaving the law alone. The police will surely be called in such a situation and will arrive in minutes. How many innocent victims will lose their lives in those minutes? If you have made it illegal to present any defense, the number will be high. Again, history has repeatedly shown us this so very clearly.

If however you leave the law alone and cease attempts to solve a non-existent problem, then it may be possible that a citizen or public employee might show the attacker that there is an ability to present an armed defense. History has shown us that in most cases, once the attacker simply sees that an armed defense is present, the threat is immediately eliminated as the attacker leaves to find a more defenseless target.

As a result of Virginia Tech, other states are moving to *relax* restrictions on campus carry. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, in 2011 at least 14 states introduced 35 bills that would allow students and faculty to carry concealed weapons on state colleges and universities or otherwise loosen restrictions on gun bans on campuses. Only two states, Maryland and Washington (now three with Oregon), introduced bills to prohibit it.

Oregon law on this matter is correct as is, SB 1550 would pose a safety hazard to children and adults on Oregon's school grounds by leaving them defenseless, and I strongly urge opposition to the language of SB 1550.

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The author of this testimony has requested to remain anonymous