
OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 347

In writing before the Senate Judiciary Committee / April 5, 2013

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Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association is comprised of Oregon's 36 elected county sheriffs. Sheriffs take seriously their charge to be "conservators of the peace." Their role in public safety is broad, including routine patrol, investigating crime, search and rescue, marine patrol, jails, community corrections, court security, civil services and the issuance of concealed handgun licenses.

America is still reeling from the horrific murders at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. And, closer to home, the murders at Clackamas Town Center have everyone thinking about the Second Amendment, gun-owners' rights and the right of the public to be safe. As we engage in a public discussion on these issues, Oregon Sheriffs hope the Legislature will be slow and deliberate in considering changes to gun laws. In the parlance of law enforcement, we believe the punishment should fit the crime.

In the case of Senate Bill 347, Oregon Sheriffs oppose the bill and the amendments.

Had SB347 been on the books in Connecticut on December 14th of last year, the murders at Sandy Hook Elementary would not have been prevented. Had SB347 been the law in Oregon in May of 1998, the murders at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon would not have been prevented.

While I am willing to be corrected if I am in error, I do not believe a single school-related shooting has resulted from a person carrying a legally concealed, legally owned firearm in a public school. So, the question begging to be answered is, "what existing problem will be solved by Senate Bill 347?"

On the other hand, Oregon Sheriffs believe allowing a school district-by-school district patchwork quilt of permissions and prohibitions on legally carrying a concealed firearm will serve only to confuse law-abiding citizens while subjecting some to prosecution simply for safely and securely carrying a concealed firearm.

Consider the hypothetical mother of a high schooler who carries a concealed firearm in her purse for protection. She never misses one of her daughter's volleyball games. At home games, she knows she can carry her firearm. But when traveling to games played at other schools, mom will need to call ahead and check from week to week on policies about carrying concealed. And, if she forgets to leave her firearm at home, should she lock it in her vehicle where it is much more likely to be stolen than when on her person, or does she conceal carry anyway hoping no one will find out? In Oregon's larger communities, with multiple school districts, the district-based policies contemplated by SB347 will cause more new enforcement problems than it will eliminate current, perceived problems with the existing CHL statutes.

In sum, Oregon Sheriffs do not believe adopting SB347 will make schools safer, children safer, our communities safer or Oregon safer. Oregon Sheriffs urge the Judiciary Committee to keep the bill in committee until adjournment. Thank you for considering our input.

Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

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