

I wish to submit testimony to the House Rules Committee in regards to Senate Bill 941.

Gun violence has affected my life in several ways. A young friend committed suicide with his father's gun. Two years later, I was only a few feet away when one boy fatally shot another in the head during an argument. A few years after that, the younger brother of my best friend, who was in a gang, fatally shot to death an old man while robbing him. The unifying factor in these cases, as with most of the 100,000 shootings each year in America, is that a gun was in the wrong hands.

Here in Oregon, thousands of prohibited persons are turned down for gun sales at gun stores every year due to successful background checks, protecting untold lives. But those prohibited people -- felons, the criminally insane, underage, domestic abusers -- need only go and answer an ad, pay cash to someone in a parking lot, and walk away with as many guns as they can pay for, with no background check required. The buyer is not checked, and the seller is not held accountable. It is inexcusable that we allow this to happen, and Oregonians are paying for it with their lives.

The gun guys will try to tell you that universal background checks are the same as "gun registration," yet we all know this isn't the truth, since the background check records are temporary.

The gun guys will try to tell you that having a background check "prevents" law abiding people from buying a gun, but the average 5 minutes it takes to perform the check is a minor inconvenience compared to public safety, and there are more licensed gun sellers in Oregon than there are post offices and Starbucks stores, combined. And anyone who passes the check is still allowed to purchase.

The gun guys will try to distort the bill by saying it will prevent them from selling a gun to an immediate family member, or loaning it to a friend at a gun range, but these are lies borne out of a failure to understand the bill's language.

The gun guys will try to tell you that background checks are somehow against the Second Amendment, but the Supreme Court itself has already stated their opinion on this, in the D.C. vs. Heller case, by writing, "The Court's opinion should not be taken to cast doubt on longstanding prohibitions on the possession of firearms by felons and the mentally ill ... or laws imposing conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms." In other words, the Second Amendment does not prohibit reasonable checks against prohibited people.

The gun guys will try to tell you that passing this law will not make a difference in availability to criminals, but according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, around 40% of guns used that were used by Federal inmates who committed gun crimes came from private transfers.

While no law can completely stop any crime, we need to stop enabling criminals to get lethal weapons. I strongly urge you, for the sake of my family's safety, to support SB 941 and finally put a close to this giant loophole that allows guns to fall into the wrong hands.

-- Jason A. Kilgore