

TO: Oregon House Committee on Rules  
FROM: Lesa Dixon-Gray, Citizen, Multnomah County  
SUBJECT: Written Testimony In Support of SB941 – Background Check  
Expansion  
DATE: April 21, 2015

I am writing in support of expanded background checks for gun ownership. I support our Constitution, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, however, the truth is that for every Constitutional Amendment, there are caveats. There are restrictions to free speech (you can't libel, or yell "Fire" in a crowded theater), restrictions to voting (prisoners don't have that right), restrictions to freedom of the press (libel and slander), etc. Our individual freedoms aren't limitless. It's our Government's role and responsibility to protect all citizens, and one person's individual freedoms will eventually compromise another's. The question is, how inconvenient is that compromise? Is it waiting a couple of days for a background check, or is it death due to a handgun in the wrong hands?

We know that the right of gun ownership has also resulted in compromising the safety of citizens. According to Department of Justice statistics, fewer on-duty police officers have died in the line of duty in those states with expanded background checks. We know that 46 percent fewer women are killed by their intimate partner abusers in States with comprehensive background checks. And we know that the gun suicide rate in States with comprehensive background checks is 48% lower. People who attempt with other means can be saved, and usually change their mind. People who attempt with guns are usually successful and can't have an opportunity to find the salvation they crave. Sadly, in Oregon, the gun suicide rate is one of the highest in the country. And, more people in Oregon die because of a firearm than die in car crashes.

Back in the 60's the death rate due to unsafe vehicles (and lack of seatbelts) became a public health issue. Now it's gun deaths. Our society, through governmental regulations legislated seatbelt use, legislated safer cars, legislated caps on speed and miles per hour on highways. Because of that, deaths have declined. Now it's time to do the same for gun deaths. And it's a small compromise to a person's Constitutional liberties to ask them to wait a couple of days while a background check is conducted.

I want to close with a personal story. My very dear, departed husband, John Gray, was an Oregon Native of several generations. And as an Oregonian with deep Eastern Oregon roots, he was an avid hunter and gun owner. His first wife, Annie, was horrifically murdered (a gun was not involved); her killer is on death row. Annie's killer was an extremely brilliant, manipulative sociopath. John's biggest fear was that he would manipulate his way off of death row (as he's done several times now over the years), and manipulate his way out of prison. When I think of Annie's murderer manipulating others, I would rather it be in the act of stealing a gun (which is harder to do than purchasing one without a background check), than

buying one off of CraigsList. I want to make it as difficult as possible for him to ever obtain a weapon, should he ever be released. Please help make it more difficult for criminals, domestic abusers, and those people experiencing suicidal ideations to obtain a firearm. It really is worth the inconvenience.

Sincerely,

Lesa A. Dixon-Gray  
Multnomah County Voter