

Before the Oregon House Committee on Rules

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SENATE BILL 941

Written Testimony Submitted by

Dan Gross

President of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence
840 First Street, NE, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20002

Chair Hoyle and fellow House Rules committee members, I thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of this legislation to expand Brady background checks to cover all gun sales. On behalf of our Oregon chapters and members, the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence fully supports Senate Bill 941 to expand Brady background checks to prevent guns from getting into the hands of dangerous people, like felons, fugitives, and domestic abusers.

Along with this testimony, I am submitting a copy of the Brady Campaign's latest report, which shows how effective Brady background checks have been in Oregon. Between checks conducted at federally licensed dealers, as mandated by the Brady Law passed by Congress in 1993, and with the added benefit in Oregon of background checks at gun shows, as mandated by the Citizen initiative that passed overwhelmingly in November 2000, tens of thousands of sales have been blocked to dangerous, prohibited purchasers. Undoubtedly, lives have been saved as a result. In 2013 alone, Brady background checks blocked 2,215 prohibited sales in Oregon; that's an average of six every day.

But what our report also shows is that a new, significant issue has developed since the implementation of the Brady Law in 1994 and since Oregon closed the gun show loophole in 2000, and that is the emergence of the Internet and the ease with which criminals can now use it to buy guns. Today, online purchases represent a shockingly easy way for criminals to evade federal and state laws and buy guns without being stopped because of a Brady background check.

The Internet hosts the largest gun show on the planet – and it never closes. Armslist.com, one of the more popular sites, posts upwards of 70,000 gun advertisements at any given time, many of which can be purchased without a background check. It's like Craigslist for guns. All a criminal needs is an email address and cash. A search of gun sales on Armslist.com in Oregon on April 13, 2015 resulted in 1,756 unlicensed seller-to-buyers advertisements that are not subject to Brady background checks.

A sale like this is documented on page eight of our report. It's an actual advertisement on Armslist.com, posted on March 22, 2015 by an individual Oregon gun seller who advertises that his firearm is available with "no background check. Cash only."

The corporate gun lobby will claim that criminals will always find a way to get guns, and if you pass a law requiring background checks you will only make it harder for law abiding citizens to buy guns. To be clear, that is complete and utter hogwash. First of all, background checks only prevent prohibited

purchasers from buying guns – people who are already not allowed to own them. In essence, background checks are the greatest tool for enforcing the laws that already exist. And, according to the FBI, they take, on average, a mere 72 seconds to complete.

And just as importantly, background checks work. In the 21 years since the Brady Law has been implemented, 2.4 million sales have been blocked to felons, fugitives, domestic abusers and other prohibited, dangerous people. States that have expanded background checks to all gun sales, as Senate Bill 941 will do for Oregon, have seen an even greater benefit in the form of increased public safety and lives saved.

In fact, according to a recent study by Everytown for Gun Safety, states that have expanded background checks experience on average 46 percent fewer women killed by intimate partners, 48 percent fewer law enforcement officers killed with guns, even 48 percent fewer gun-related suicides. Clearly, background checks are effective in keeping guns out of dangerous hands.

Since the terrible tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, Congress has failed the American people by failing to “Finish the Job” started with the Brady bill and expand background checks to gun shows and online sales nationally. Yet fortunately for the American people, states have started to take matters into their own hands, with five states passing new laws expanding background checks in just the last two years.

Now, thanks to Senate Bill 941, the Oregon legislature has a critical opportunity to continue this wave of momentum sweeping across the nation, to reflect the will of the overwhelming majority of Oregon voters who support expanded background checks (87 percent according to the latest polling) and, most importantly, to make Oregon a much safer state for everyone who lives, visits, or does business here.

On behalf of Sarah Brady and our Oregon members and chapters, the Brady Campaign fully supports Senate Bill 941 and I ask for your AYE vote. I thank all the committee members for the opportunity to submit written testimony.