

FROM THE DESK OF  
REP. BARBARA SMITH WARREN

*Barbara Smith Warren*



**MAYORS AGAINST  
ILLEGAL GUNS**

April 14, 2015

Senate President Peter Courtney  
900 Court St. NE, S-201  
Salem, Oregon 97301

House Speaker Tina Kotek  
900 Court St. NE, Rm. 269  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli  
900 Court St. NE, S-323  
Salem, Oregon 97301

House Republican Leader Mike McLane  
900 Court St. NE, H-395  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Sen. Courtney, Sen. Ferrioli, Rep. Kotek and Rep. McLane:

The Oregon coalition of Mayors Against Illegal Guns writes to respectfully ask that you vote in favor of Senate Bill 941, which would help save lives by requiring criminal background checks on all gun sales. We are a bipartisan coalition of 14 mayors who support the Second Amendment while recognizing that we can do more to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people. As mayors, the public safety of our communities is our highest priority, and this bill would help protect the lives of our citizens and the law enforcement officers who protect us.

In the past several weeks, the Oregon coalition of Mayors Against Illegal Guns has more than doubled. We represent big urban centers and small rural towns from the coast to the high desert to the Columbia River Gorge.

Mayors answer the calls in the middle of the night when a police officer or a child is shot. We see firsthand the devastation that gun violence brings, not only to the victims and their families, but to entire neighborhoods and communities. In the last decade of available data, 567 Oregonians were murdered with guns, and another 3,440 committed suicide or were killed in accidents with guns. As mayors, we are especially concerned about the gun murders of law enforcement officers, more than half of which since 1980 have come at the hands of felons and others who are likely prohibited from buying guns.

Background checks on all gun sales are the most effective way to keep guns out of the hands of dangerous people and save lives. Seventeen states go beyond federal law and require background checks on all handgun sales. In states that require these checks, 46 percent fewer women are shot and killed by intimate partners, 48 percent fewer law enforcement officers are shot to death with handguns, and 48 percent fewer people kill themselves with guns. Since its inception, the background check system has blocked more than 2.5 million gun sales nationwide. In 2013 alone in Oregon, the background check system blocked 3,982 gun sales to felons, domestic abusers and other prohibited people.

Unfortunately, a loophole in current law here in Oregon enables felons and other dangerous people to buy guns from unlicensed sellers, including strangers they meet online. This loophole makes it easy for criminals to log onto websites like Armslist.com and find unlicensed gun sellers who are not required to conduct background checks on gun buyers. In fact, data from just



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four websites where Oregonians buy and sell guns suggest that unlicensed sellers in Oregon post more than 25,000 gun ads a year, far more than the number of sales by unlicensed sellers at gun shows.

Since 2000, Oregon has required background checks for unlicensed sales at gun shows, but that has done little to plug the loophole in the digital age: unlicensed sellers in Oregon post more gun ads online each week than they sell at gun shows in a full year. Senate Bill 941 would close this loophole and keep guns out of dangerous hands. It also enjoys broad public support, with 81 percent of Oregonians supporting background checks on all gun sales.

The bottom line, as former Portland Police Chief Mike Reese told the Senate Judiciary committee, is that “it is far too easy for a prohibited person to avoid a background check by simply buying a gun from an unlicensed seller.” We know that by working together, we can make Oregon a safer place for all of our residents. This is why we strongly support SB 941 to require criminal background checks on all gun sales.

Sincerely,

### **The Oregon coalition of Mayors Against Illegal Guns**

**Astoria Mayor Arline LaMear  
Damascus Mayor Diana Helm  
Donald Mayor Daroll Nicholson  
Durham Mayor Gery Schirado  
Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy  
Forest Grove Mayor Peter Truax**

**Hood River Mayor Paul Blackburn  
Klamath Falls Mayor Todd Kellstrom  
Portland Mayor Charlie Hales  
Prineville Mayor Betty Roppe  
Veneta Mayor Sandra Larson**

CC: Senate President Pro Tempore Ginny Burdick, Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum, Senator Herman Baertschiger Jr., Senator Alan Bates, Senator Lee Beyer, Senator Brian Boquist, Senator Michael Dembrow, Senator Richard Devlin, Senator Chris Edwards, Senator Sara Gelsner, Senator Fred Girod, Senator Bill Hansell, Senator Mark Hass, Senator Betsy Johnson, Senator Tim Knopp, Senator Jeff Kruse, Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, Senator Rod Monroe, Senator Alan Olsen, Senator Floyd Prozanski, Senator Chuck Riley, Senator Arnie Roblan, Senator Chip Shields, Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Senator Kim Thatcher, Senator Chuck Thomsen, Senator Doug Whitsett, Senator Jackie Winters