

Senate bill proposes background checks at gun shows

A community forum met to advocate the bill to the Legislature

By Felicity Ayles
Oregon Daily Emerald

In 1996, 13 children were killed every day by guns. That is the equivalent of a Columbine High School shooting every day.

It is for that reason the Eugene Community Action Forum came together Monday afternoon to ask the State Legislature to pass Senate Bill 700. The bill, which would require background checks for individuals attempting to buy guns at gun shows, was sent back to committee Friday after passing through the Senate earlier in the week.

The current system allows anyone, even a convicted felon, to purchase a gun at a gun show without a background check.

"We want to make it clear that we will not go away or forget," said Anthony Biglan, Community Action Forum president. "We demand the support of the Legislature to prevent the slaughter of our children."

If this bill is not recognized, Oregonians must put people in office who do support it, Biglan said.

"We are redoubling our efforts to have our voices heard in Salem," Biglan said. He said it is hard to believe that any legislator would oppose such a modest step toward violence prevention.

Biglan pleaded with the 30 people present to contact their representative in Salem to show support for the bill.

Dr. Martin Jones, board member of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Physicians,

said legislators need to stand up for the health and safety of all Oregonians.

"This bill closes a loophole in the government and deserves to be passed exactly as is," Jones said. Those representatives who think differently are out of touch with the will of the people, he said.

Jones called for legislators to put aside partisan politics and put an end to gun-related violence.

"Oregonians deserve gutsy leadership that will help to protect them from this crime," he said.

City Councilor David Kelly said this bill is supported throughout the state across regional and party lines. He said this new piece of legislation is simple, inexpensive and reason-

able but passing it is like "pulling teeth" in the Legislature.

"This is not rocket science, it's common sense," he said. "The Legislature is not listening to the public."

Kelly said the public needs to demand that strong background checking come out of this legislative session and urged Eugene citizens to contact their representatives and register their support.

Carol Metzler, founding president of Children First for Oregon, spoke with tears in her eyes about her worries for the safety of her children. She said she is dedicated to advocating public policies for the safety of Oregon's children.

"How does it benefit the children that we continue to allow individuals to buy weapons at gun shows?" she asked. "People

who should not possess guns get easy access to them through gun shows."

Metzler said she feels the bill is modest and would simply close a loophole in the current gun law.

"As a mother, I fail to understand how requiring a background check at gun shows infringes on the rights of gun owners," she said. "If the NRA are truly concerned about children's safety, they would be doing everything they can to keep guns out of felons' hands."

She said her children and children all over Oregon are the main reason she is so concerned about this particular bill.

"Enough is enough," she said. "Now is the time for some action on gun safety legislation."

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Star Wars

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other "Star Wars" fanatics at Cinema World, are joining thousands across the country in similar scenes. The quartet set up camp Saturday at 10 p.m. and takes turns watching over their prized spot. Andrew began his first extended shift Monday at 8 a.m. and said that a few people have attempted to bribe him for tickets, to which he responded, "No way."

He also had to endure some ribbing Saturday night during the initial stakeout, while moviegoers streamed out of late-night movies.

"We've had a lot of mixed comments from people," he said, with a few biting ones coming from the high school-aged crowd. "We're like caged monkeys to them, and they're laughing at us like we're in a zoo. We've had other people come out who are my age (25) and they've said, 'You know, if I didn't have to

work, I'd be right there with you. You guys are so cool to be able to do this.'"

"I was just trying to stand proud," he added. "This is fun, it's going to be an adventure, and it's cool to be out here with all these people."

As of late Monday afternoon, 11 tents were set up snake-like, winding around the building. Elizabeth Becker, first assistant manager at the cineplex, said the theater is "going to do whatever it takes to keep the campers comfortable and happy. We've received a big-screen television from Circuit City and we're going to be showing the 'Star Wars' trilogy, and hopefully 'The Making of Star Wars.'"

Once tickets go on sale, buyers can snag up to 12 per person and can purchase for shows up to four weeks in advance, said Ted Hatfield, promotions director for Regal Cinemas, based in

Nashville, Tenn. Hatfield once worked for Lucas Films and is happy to be part of the hubbub.

"I've been in the film business since I was 11 years old, working as an usher," he relates. "This 'Star Wars' is the biggest one of all. This is going to be one of the highlights of my career."

Cinemark 17 in Gateway Mall, Cinema World's local competition for "Star Wars" viewers, will not experience an on-site atmosphere similar to its rival.

"Anyone who is here before 6 a.m. Wednesday morning will be asked to leave," said Debbie Offill, Gateway Mall marketing secretary, pointing to mall security and safety rules as the reason for the lockout. She added that Cinemark officials did meet Monday afternoon with mall management in an attempt to bend the rules, but the policy remains unchanged.

"In terms of promotion, that's

a theater-by-theater, market-by-market decision," points out Randy Hester, vice president of marketing for Cinemark, from the corporate office in Plano, Texas. "Honestly, though, this movie needs very little in the way of promotion. We've never before had the hype and the anticipation surrounding this movie."

At least one other person waiting in the Cinema World line echoed Hester's sense of expectation.

"I think a lot of the hype is because of how long we've had to wait for the next movie after 'Return of the Jedi,'" said University graduate Neil Ripley, while lounging with his friend Jacob Henner, a Lane Community College student.

Ripley and Henner arrived at 2 a.m. Monday after cruising by earlier to see when the line was going to start forming. Andrew's

group, as well as six others, beat them to the starting point, however, and the pair had to settle for the eighth spot.

"Whenever the sun is out, we're gonna set up our chairs, talk with people as they come by, maybe even see a movie while we wait," Henner said.

For the less-enthusiastic trying to grasp why someone would wait almost four days to buy tickets for what, after all, is still just a movie, Andrew shed some light on the "Star Wars" appeal.

"It's such a basic story, but it breaks down like a mythological tale, sort of a modern-day 'Iliad' or 'Odyssey,'" he said. "We'll probably do this again for the second and third movies when they come out. Someday they may release all six films together in a theater and we'll be about 50 or 60 years old and we'll be telling our grandchildren, 'Have we got tales to tell.'"

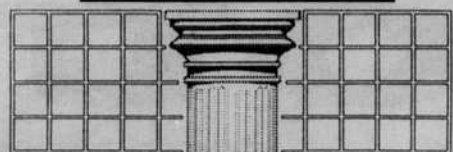
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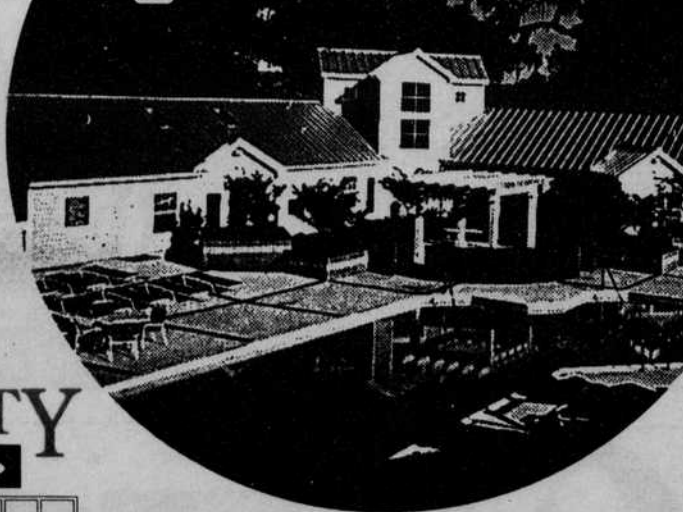
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