

## Bill aimed at protecting home renters passes state Senate

By **Andrew Selsky**  
The Associated Press

SALEM — Lawmakers in the Oregon Senate approved a bill Tuesday that aims to protect home renters amid a statewide housing crisis, with the measure restricting landlords from terminating a tenancy and from imposing large rent increases.

The bill passed on Tuesday with 17 in favor and 11 opposed. It now goes to the House.

Sen. Tim Knopp, a Republican from Bend, said before he voted against the measure that it doesn't address the supply issue. Oregon has a serious shortage of affordable housing.

But in testimony for a recent hearing on the bill, Bend resident Eric Lint said it is needed because rents are skyrocketing, causing multiple impacts.

He said the medical lab where he works is chronically understaffed, with potential hires citing a lack of affordable housing in Bend, a town that lies in the shad-

ow of the Cascade Range and has attracted droves of outdoor enthusiasts, retirees and entrepreneurs, causing a population boom.

Lint's hourly pay has risen 8 percent over five years. Meanwhile, his rent has increased 66 percent. He plans to move away in the fall.

Sen. Jeff Golden, D-Rogue Valley, told fellow senators before he voted yes that the alternative to the bill is to say: "Sorry Oregon renters, you're on your own."

The Oregon Rental Housing Association, which describes itself as the only state association whose focus is the smaller rental owner/operator, has a neutral position on the bill.

"After reviewing this bill, I believe most landlords will be able to adapt and operate within the parameters," said Jim Straub, the rental association's legislative director.

He said in written testimony the proposed law protects good tenants while not encouraging landlords to leave the business and invest their

money elsewhere.

The bill prohibits landlord from terminating month-to-month tenancy without cause after 12 months of occupancy. It also limits maximum rent increases to once per year, and to 7 percent above the annual change in the consumer price index.

It also allows landlord to terminate tenancy with 90 days' written notice and payment of one month's rent, with exemptions in some cases. A landlord can refuse to renew a fixed term tenancy if the tenant receives three lease violation warnings within 12 months and the landlord gives 90 days' notice.

Another bill, on the House side of the Legislature, addresses the housing shortage. That bill had a public hearing Monday.

It would require cities and counties to allow duplexes and some higher-density housing — but not large apartment complexes — in lands zoned for single-family dwellings.

Under Oregon law, cities and towns have urban growth boundaries to control urban expansion onto farms and forests. But zoning within those boundaries has historically been handled by local governments, said House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland. Kotek told reporters Monday she expects "pushback" from cities.

"This is new for the state to come in and look for additional allowances in residential areas," she said Monday before she testified at the public hearing.

Around 30,000 housing units must be built per year to meet the current deficit in housing and to build for the future as more people move to the state, Kotek said.

Kotek is a co-sponsor of the Senate bill on renter protections, along with Sen. Ginny Burdick, who is from Portland and is the Senate majority leader; and Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, D-Gresham.



Courtesy photo

The high winds this week caused 'snowballs' to accumulate in the fields in Imbler.

## SNOW

*Continued from Page 1A* amounts of precipitation. He also noted that the snow was far from over.

NWS forecasts for the rest of the week do not include more than a single inch of snow over any 12-hour period, but also includes at least a trace of snowfall every 12-hour period until Monday.

The weather has caused a number of school and road closures over the past few days. On Monday, Elgin and Imbler school districts were closed for the day. North Powder School District released students at 12:15 p.m.

I-84 westbound was closed at the La Grande Exit 265 for several hours on Monday afternoon as well, due to a crash involving a semi-truck.

While rain is in the forecast on Thursday from the late morning until 11 p.m., Brooks said there won't be an extended reprieve from the snowy weather until next Wednesday.

"It looks like we're going to be dealing with this weather all the way out until Friday and maybe even until Wednesday of next week," Brooks said. "It's just where we're sitting on the jet stream at the moment and it's bringing in one low after another."

## GUN BILLS

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Kevin Starrett, director of the Oregon Firearms Federation, cast the legislation in stark terms.

"The common thread I see is that the Democrats in Oregon have declared war on young Oregonians and I think it's disgraceful," said Starrett, whose organization strongly supports Second Amendment rights.

The bill also creates a misdemeanor crime of endangering a minor by allowing children to have access to firearms either deliberately without their parent's consent or through carelessness by keeping firearms in a place where minors could access it.

Under the bill, minors can only possess a firearm legally with the consent of their parent or guardian. The proposal doesn't apply in cases when the firearm is locked or the minor illegally broke into the premises where the firearm is kept.

### Ammunition limits

Senate Bill 501 is the firearms bill that is among the strictest. It would limit ammunition purchases to 20 rounds in a 30-day period and prohibit firearm magazines that can hold more than five rounds.

It also puts a permit requirement in place before purchasing a firearm and mandates gun locks and safes.

Sen. Rob Wagner, D-Tualatin, and Rep. Andrea Salinas, D-Lake Oswego, brought the bill forward at the request of Students for Change, a group of students from Lake Oswego pushing for reforms in the wake of the 2018 Parkland shooting, where 17 people died at a Florida high school.

Wagner said the bill is intended to start a discussion about firearms and the concepts in the bill are likely to change with more discussion, including from students.

No other bill attempts to achieve as many gun-control goals as SB 501. Statesman Journal

"This is about students feeling like they can engage with their elected officials," he said. "If they want to have a conversation about this, let's empower them to have a conversation about it."

Sportsmen have con-

cerns about the bill, including the 20-round limit restricting how much hunting they can do. The limits on magazine clips are also a concern.

"We read it as it would virtually ban every revolver, every handgun and every rifle — most of them," Findlay said.

### Gun locks

Firearms would have to be safely stored, either in a locked safe or secured with a trigger lock or cable lock, under House Bill 2505.

Its co-sponsor, Rep. Barbara Smith Warner, D-Portland, called the measure a "public health approach to a public health crisis."

Violators face fines: up to \$500 per violation, or up to \$2,000 for cases in which a minor obtains the firearm because it was unsecured.

The fines for violators would be through citations, not felony or misdemeanors.

"It's just an expectation, but it's not criminalizing it," she said.

In comparison, Senate Bill 501 has a potential 30-day jail sentence for not using a gun lock or safe.

Smith Warner said the bill would help address suicides by putting an added step that interrupts the act and stops people.

A similar bill, Senate Bill 275, is pending in the Senate. One of its chief sponsors, Sen. James I. Manning Jr., D-Eugene, said the goal of the bill is to keep children from accessing loaded guns and hurting themselves or others.

"This bill is designed to save lives," he said. "It's not designed to take away anybody's Second Amendment rights."

### Limiting age for buying long guns

Senate Bill 87 would allow gun dealers to set a minimum age of 21 for customers to purchase ammunition or long guns like rifles and shotguns.

The bill comes after Walmart and Dick's Sporting Goods faced a lawsuit in 2018 from a 20-year-old Oregon man after they won't sell him a firearm because of his age. Both stores had policies of not selling to customers under 21.

State law sets the minimum age for buying a shotgun or rifle at 18.

"I do think allowing retailers to not sell to anyone under the age of 21 is something retailers are asking us to give them, so I think that would be one of those things that moves or could move," Kotek said.

### 'Do not sell' list

People could opt into a voluntary "do not sell" list for firearms, under House Bill 2705.

Rep. Dan Rayfield, D-Corvallis, said the bill is focused on suicide prevention and mental health. Anyone requesting to be placed on the list would have their information entered into the background check system used for firearm sales.

If someone wants to be removed, they have to wait 21 days. During that period, an emailed notice can go to any designated family members.

Rayfield said he's hopeful the voluntary nature of the program will help it avoid becoming a contentious issue.

But that's not guaranteed.

"I think there is a general fear in this building that any bill with the word 'firearm' in it is going to cause intense and immediate negative reaction among certain subsets of legislators that really care about the Second Amendment," he said. "And so I think the real question is going to be how much tolerance is there to hear all of these bills that are creating more headlines than mine."

### Concealed handgun licenses

Not every bill would put restrictions in place. Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer, is making a run again at getting Oregon to recognize concealed handgun licenses from any other state, or reciprocity.

House Bill 2298 will die, if past efforts are any indication.

"I don't have high hopes," said Rep. Post, who has pushed similar legislation in 2017 and 2015, when it passed the House.

He compares the concept to out-of-state driver licenses.

"We have no problem with people driving a three-ton vehicle across the border," he said. "We don't even blink about driver's licenses."

"It's definitely not going to be a pro-gun legislative session," Post said.

### Gun safety training

Firearm safety training would be an option for schools, under one proposal. House Bill 2287 would allow, but not require, school districts to have firearm safety training for either students or

adult members of the public.

The bill would require the trainer to be a certified firearms instructor and encourages working with local law enforcement. Training could provide basic instruction like determining if a firearm is loaded or unloaded or in how to use a firearm for trap shooting and hunting.

"This bill says that as a matter of public policy that it is an advantageous pursuit to offer safe firearms training," said Rep. Brad Witt, D-Clatskanie.

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