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Committed to Cultural Diversity

‘Put Gun Control on the Ballot’

Leaders urge people to sign petition

By BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Passions are running high with shared outrage as massacres involving high-powered guns continue to roil America and deadly gun violence at home and across the county reach record levels.

Gun control activists rooted in the black community have joined Lift Every Voice Oregon, a statewide group of interfaith leaders, to encourage others to join them by adding their name to a petition to put gun control on the November ballot.

A news conference to rally the cause took place at Augustana Lutheran Church in northeast Portland followed the recent killings of 19 children and two of their teachers at a Texas elementary school and the deaths of 10 Black grocery store shoppers killed by an alleged white teenage racist.

Speaker after speaker at the church shared their outrage at the massacres, and they all had one goal: to get signatures on their gun control petition.

Lift Every Voice Oregon has received approval of titles for two ballot measures, Initiative Petitions 17 and 18. They are



PHOTO BY BEVERLY CORBELL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Gun control activists rooted in the black community, including Rev. Mark Knudson of Augustana Lutheran Church, are leading the effort by Lift Every Voice Oregon, a statewide group of interfaith leaders, to encourage voters to sign a petition to put gun control on the November ballot.

pushing for signatures on IP 17 for this year, while they plan to bring IP 18 to the state legislature in its next session.

Black activist and musician Marilyn Keller, one of the three chief petitioners of

IP 17, shared her disgust with gun deaths, saying she was “sick and tired of being sick and tired, and we who believe in freedom cannot wait.”

If this petition doesn’t make it on the

ballot, Keller said, it would be another two years before it can be attempted again.

“Can you imagine how many thousands of lives could be lost in two years? I can. I don’t want to see it,” she said. “Until the killing of children, the killing of Black people, of Jews, of Muslims, Ukrainians, until the killing of other people is as abhorrent as us stepping into a pool of sewage. We need to move. We need to move now.”

Keller said that Oregon is the only West Coast state that doesn’t have “common sense” gun laws.

“Washington has passed them, California has them at the legislative level,” she said. “Will we stand still and allow this opportunity to pass without doing anything?”

Keller is urging everyone to visit lifteveryvoiceoregon.com to add their names to the petition. People can print the signature sheet, sign it and mail it back to the Life Every Voice address on the website. They are also asking for volunteers and donations to support the effort.

If the measure passes, according to the website, it will require background checks before a gun purchase, safety training, a permit to acquire firearms, photo ID and fingerprint for a state police firearm per-

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Historic Pick for US Attorney

Biden nominates first Black, woman of color

President Joe Biden has nominated Natalie K. Wight to serve as U.S. Attorney for Oregon. She would become the first Black person and second Asian American to serve as Oregon’s top federal prosecutor if confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

Wight is a 1992 graduate of Cleveland High School where she was a Hall of Fame athlete.

“It is an honor to be nominated and I look forward to the confirmation process,” she said in a statement.

Wight has served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney for Oregon since 2012.

She previously worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in Northern California and as an attorney at the Federal Bureau of Prisons from 2003 to 2008. She received her law

degree from the University of Notre Dame Law School in 2003 and a master’s degree in science from California State University in 2000 and a bachelor’s degree in science from the College of Idaho in 1996.

Wight was inducted into the Portland Interscholastic League Hall of Fame for her accomplishments in soccer, basketball and track while a student at Cleveland. In recent years, she brought her expertise in the law to the southeast Portland school to voluntarily serve as a mock trial coach.

“We strongly support President Biden’s nomination of Natalie Wight to be the next U.S. Attorney for Oregon,” Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley said in a joint statement. “She brings an outstanding combination of leadership, integrity, independence and community connections to this crucial post. We look forward to advancing her through the Senate confirmation process.”



Natalie K. Wight would become the first woman of color to become U.S. Attorney for Oregon if confirmed by the U.S. Senate.