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Committed to Cultural Diversity



Backers of a proposed initiative that would require individuals to secure permits to buy firearms and ban large-capacity magazines deliver the signatures of thousands of voters to state election offices on July 8 in Salem. The backers say they have enough signatures to place the measure on the November ballot. (AP photo)

Signature Drive Complete

Gun Control Backers rejoice, expect fall ballot

(AP) — Backers of a proposed initiative in Oregon that would require people to secure permits to buy firearms say concern about recent mass shootings have buoyed their effort and they have enough signatures to place it on the November ballot.

The Rev. Mark Knutson, a chief petitioner of the initiative, delivered signatures July 8 to the Oregon secretary of state's office in Salem, accompanied by students and other volunteers. Election officials, who work under Secretary of State Shemia Fagan, will verify that the

signatures are from registered voters.

Proponents of the measure say they've seen surging interest in the possible November ballot question following recent mass shootings, and they hope the move to put the gun issue before voters catches fire in other states.

"Let's go across the nation, and go from grief and despair and mourning," Knutson said. "We just need to take action. If people are afraid, if neighbors are being shot, if our children are in fear — if we don't take action, what are we doing?"

The initiative supporters needed to deliver at least 112,080 registered voters' signatures by the Friday deadline to get on the ballot, Knutson said. Proponents say they delivered 161,545 signatures.

It would ban large capacity magazines over 10 rounds — except for current owners, law enforcement and the military — and require a permit to purchase

any gun. The state police would create a firearms database.

To qualify for a permit, an applicant must complete an approved firearm safety course, pay a fee, provide personal information, submit to fingerprinting and photographing and pass a criminal background check. The person must apply for the permit from the local police chief, county sheriff or their designees.

Oregon appears to be the only state in America with a gun safety initiative underway for the 2022 election, according to Sean Holihan, state legislative director for Giffords, an organization dedicated to saving lives from gun violence.

The National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action has denounced the initiative, saying on its website that "these anti-gun citizens are coming after YOU, the law-abiding firearm owners of Oregon, and YOUR guns. They don't care about the Constitution,

your right to keep and bear arms, or your God-given right of self-defense."

Voters in two predominantly Democratic neighboring states have already passed gun safety ballot measures.

In 2018, Washington state voters approved restrictions on the purchase and ownership of firearms, including raising the minimum purchasing age to 21, adding background checks and increasing waiting periods. In 2016, voters there overwhelmingly approved a measure authorizing courts to issue extreme risk protection orders to remove an individual's access to firearms.

California voters in 2016 passed a measure prohibiting the possession of large-capacity ammunition magazines and requiring certain individuals to pass a background check to buy ammunition.

The same year, voters in Maine narrowly defeated a proposal to require background checks before a gun sale.