

# GUNS: The U.S. firearm homicide rate has been steadily dropping since 1993

Continued from 1A

ownership was part of the culture. "That doesn't mean there weren't problems with guns," he said. An eighth grade classmate was accidentally shot and killed by his father while hunting. A kid living nearby was shot by his brother but survived. A friend's father committed suicide with a gun. An elderly neighbor shot his wife, then killed himself. "Guns were very much part of the culture, but so were gun deaths," Hare said.

Senior Trooper Kreg Coggins, who works from the Oregon State Police outpost in Enterprise, said he interacts with armed, legal hunters 12 months of the year.

"I'm somewhat de-sensitized to people who have guns," he said. "It's kind of odd for them *not* to have guns."

## Means of protection

In the rural West, help from sheriff's deputies or state troopers may be spread thin and miles distant.

Some residents, it's fair to say, own guns and keep them handy out of a belief that they may need to protect themselves, their families and their livestock, equipment, crops or other valuables.

Two-legged troublemakers are a worry, but many rural Westerners

also share the landscape with coyotes, cougars, wolves or bears.

Eastern Idaho rancher Brian Mays, who leases a 300-acre private pasture southeast of Henry's Lake, estimates grizzlies have killed 14 of his cows in the past four years — four this season. He recently rounded up some heavily armed compatriots to help him scour the brush for cattle, or bears.

"They're not the warm fuzzy creatures everybody seems to think they are," Mays said. "If urban people could see how vicious they are with their prey when they kill them, it might wake them up."

## Urban reality

It's different in cities. Some urban areas put up with the occasional cougar scare or coyotes carrying off cats, but most city wildlife encounters involve raccoons or possums, not wolves or grizzlies.

Gang shootouts are a danger in some city neighborhoods. The presence of unruly street kids and unkempt homeless people, some of them clearly mentally ill, may add to urban unease about weapons or an interest in possessing them.

The *Oregonian* newspaper reported in 2013 that 1 in 16 Oregonians held a concealed handgun license, or CHL. At one point in the early 2000s in Gresham, a Portland

suburb, two members of the city council and its city manager held CHLs.

Open carry is legal in Portland, but guns must be unloaded unless the carrier has a concealed handgun license, Portland Police Bureau spokesman Sgt. Pete Simpson said in an email.

Portland police have responded to 9-1-1 calls involving people who were openly carrying firearms, Simpson said. Statistics on the number of such calls are not readily available, but Simpson said officers respond based on information they receive. Open-carry advocates such as Goit, the Hermiston gun shop owner, might not be received calmly in cities.

"It is problematic in an urban environment," Simpson said, "as it's not something people are used to seeing and arguably could put the carrier at risk from another carrier who may perceive a threat."

## Armed with statistics

A report released in August by the Pew Research Center, based in Washington, D.C., documented the urban-rural differences. Of people living in urban areas, 60 percent believe it's more important to control gun ownership and 38 percent believe gun rights should take priority. The results are

reversed in rural areas, with 63 percent saying gun rights are more important. Suburban residents were evenly divided on the question.

The question of whether to ban the sale of military-style assault weapons also illustrates the divide. Sixty-two percent of urban residents favor a ban, while agreement drops to 56 percent of suburban residents and 48 percent of rural residents, according to the Pew report.

But a greater percentage of rural and suburban residents — 80 percent and 81 percent, respectively, compared to 76 percent of urban residents — believe mentally ill people should be banned from having guns.

Interestingly, the U.S. firearm homicide rate has been steadily dropping since 1993, according to the Pew study. Homicides involving firearms accounted for seven deaths per 100,000 people in 1993, but dropped to 3.6 per 100,000 people by 2010, according to the study. Suicides account for 60 percent of firearms deaths nationally, and about 75 percent in Oregon, according to the group Ceasefire Oregon.

The group, based in Portland, describes itself as opposing gun violence and advocating for reasonable gun control laws. Among other things, Ceasefire Oregon hosts voluntary gun turn-in events that

since 1994 have resulted in more than 7,800 weapons being turned in and destroyed.

## Common ground

Executive Director Penny Okamoto said the urban-rural gun divide is not as deep as groups such as the National Rifle Association would have people believe.

The vast majority of gun owners support background checks, safe storage of weapons and suicide prevention programs, Okamoto said.

Ceasefire Oregon also advocates a ban on high-capacity magazines and a limit of one gun purchase a month to prevent trafficking, she said.

"We have a lot of common ground," Okamoto said. "People are not opposed to responsible gun ownership, and that's the vast majority of gun owners."

"There are a lot of things we can do to reduce gun violence and stay well within the Second Amendment," she said.

"I tell people gun violence is like cancer," she said. "There are a lot of different kinds of cancer, and a lot of different kinds of gun violence."

"You can't cure all cancer with one pill, and you can't kill gun violence with one law or one education program."

# PENDLETON: Property could generate \$250,000 in revenue

Continued from 1A

mine the value by finding the prices of other vacant buildings sold in the area.

Plute also suggested the city demolish the building, which he said wasn't valuable without a tenant, and sell the vacant land instead.

"I'd be willing to bet you would make almost as much on a parking lot than with a

building on it with all the maintenance, repairs, depreciations etc.," he said.

Councilor McKennon McDonald wasn't keen on the idea, saying the property was too small for it to be worth the effort. The building is 8,450 square feet.

Kerns said there are additional steps before the property can be sold, including a public hearing at a future city

council meeting.

In a report to the city council, Kerns estimated the property could generate \$250,000 in revenue. Some councilors noted the building and land could be assessed property tax if the city divested them.

Contact Antonio Sierra at [asierra@eastoregonian.com](mailto:asierra@eastoregonian.com) or 541-966-0836.

# CAMPS: Trees cleared out along Hermiston Ditch

Continued from 1A

works department had been cleaning out the debris, including 14 empty propane tanks, at least some of which were suspected stolen property.

He said law enforcement had tried to make sure those who were contacted about moving out of the city were given information about available help, including the free Kayak Public Transit bus that can take people from Umatilla to Hermiston for a visit to the Agape House or other resources.

"I really don't want to in any way diminish the plight of the homeless population, but this is not just someone struggling to survive in the woods," Ward said. "These are places that are unsafe to live due to illegal activity and unhygienic conditions."

At the same time the Umatilla Police Department was directing people to

move out of the camps along the Umatilla River, a private property owner in Hermiston decided to clear out trees along the Hermiston Ditch behind Wal-Mart that had often given shelter to some of Hermiston's homeless population.

Hermiston Police Department Chief Jason Edmiston said the burning of the trees along the ditch was not initiated by law enforcement, but the property owner did contact the department to ask if officers could be sent beforehand to notify people of the plan to destroy the trees. Edmiston said the department assisted in notifying people they were on private property.

David Hughes of the Agape House said when cities or property owners undertake an effort to clear out a homeless camp it may take care of that particular site, but the people who were living there almost always

just move to a different place.

"Unfortunately that does not solve the problem. You need a long-range plan to get them off drugs and off the streets," he said.

He said many chronically homeless people have issues with drugs and mental health, but unfortunately the state hasn't given communities the resources to fund mental health programs at the level they are needed.

As the holiday season approaches and people are in a more giving mood, Hughes said a donation to an established charity such as the Agape House, Salvation Army or a church can do more to help the area's homeless residents than giving money to a person asking for it on a street corner.

Contact Jade McDowell at [jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com](mailto:jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com) or 541-564-4536.

# WATCHDOG: Wants membership to be even between parties

Continued from 1A

it was appropriated.

"I don't think that we do nearly as rigorous a job as we should in tracking where those dollars go and how they're spent," Johnson said.

The committee could also follow up when agencies fail to implement suggestions by state auditors. For example, employees at the Department of Administrative Services, which houses the state data center, failed to fix security problems at the data center despite repeated warnings by auditors dating back to 2006.

"This committee on accountability would be in demanding agencies' conformance to management letters, if there were letters of improvement that were issued with an audit that called out deficiencies at an

agency," Johnson said.

One aspect of the proposal that could generate opposition is Johnson wants membership to be split 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans.

Another sticking point could be the cost. Although Johnson has not proposed a specific budget for the committee, she said "I would give them access to lawyers, I would give them access to an audit function."

The Legislature already has nonpartisan staff lawyers, budget staff and economists to forecast revenue and other impacts of legislation and policy.

The Legislative Fiscal Office, which works on budgets, is already short-staffed, Johnson said.

"The fact of the matter is that I think there are too few

people in legislative fiscal for the work that they're doing, and the amount of complexity that now is out there in agency land," Johnson said. "And by complexity, I mean information technology projects."

In addition, Johnson would hand the committee decision-making authority over what state programs to audit, which would mean taking control away from the Secretary of State.

Johnson said her proposal was not intended as a criticism of the Secretary of State's audits staff, whom she described as "very capable professionals."

"But somebody is making a policy decision about where those audits ought to dig into," Johnson said, and she believes lawmakers ought to make that call.



## CONCEALED CARRY PERMIT CLASS


**Oregon - Utah - Valid 35 States**

**PENDLETON**  
Red Lion - 304 SE Nye Ave.  
Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> • 1:00 pm or 6:00 pm

**Walk-Ins Welcome!**


**OR/Utah: (Valid in WA) \$80.00 or Oregon only: \$45**  
[www.FirearmTrainingNW.com](http://www.FirearmTrainingNW.com) • [FirearmTrainingNW@gmail.com](mailto:FirearmTrainingNW@gmail.com)

**360-921-2071**



## DON'T MISS OUT!

Celebrate Your Loved Ones in Our **Veterans Day SALUTE**



**Staff Sergeant Joel Davis**  
US Marines Veteran  
Example

*Honoring those who have served and those that are currently serving our country!*

Bring us a picture of your servicemen or servicewomen or veteran by **November 5<sup>th</sup>** along with the form below and we will include them in our "Veterans Day Salute" on November 11<sup>th</sup> in the East Oregonian and Hermiston Herald at no charge.

For more information, call Paula at 1-800-522-0255 or *Hermiston Herald* at 541-564-4530.

Service Person's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Military Branch \_\_\_\_\_ Military Rank \_\_\_\_\_  Currently Serving  Veteran (Check One)

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your Address \_\_\_\_\_

Your Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Deliver to:

East Oregonian | Hermiston Herald  
211 SE Byers Ave. | 333 E. Main.  
• Pendleton, OR | • Hermiston, OR


or e-mail to [classifieds@eastoregonian.com](mailto:classifieds@eastoregonian.com)

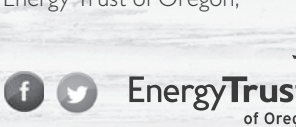

## WATTSMART, OREGON.

# HOME TO WELL-INSULATED HOMES.

Every resident of WattsMart knows a well-insulated home is a more energy-efficient home. It's also a home that feels cozy in the winter and cooler in the summer. And with cash incentives from Energy Trust of Oregon,

you can add insulation to your home and save energy for years to come. You may not live in WattsMart, but you can learn to live wattsMart®. More tips and cash incentives at [bewattsMart.com](http://bewattsMart.com).



Let's turn the answers on.