

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# 'Imminent risk' bill puts family in control, but not without flaws

The state Senate bill that allows removing guns from people deemed threatening to themselves or others certainly has good intentions, but brings with it some very real problems legislators should recognize.

If passed by the House and signed by the governor, the bill would allow a family member or law enforcement officer to petition the court for an "extreme risk protection order" prohibiting a person from possessing guns and other deadly weapons. If the court finds the person presents risk of suicide or injury to another person in the near future, the person would have 24 hours to surrender their guns.

On its face, the bill seems as if it would benefit public safety and health. And the aim of preventing people who truly are threats to themselves or others from possessing the means to carry out those imminent threats is noble.

It also puts the onus where we believe it belongs — on those closest to the subject. The bill stipulates that the family member must be in the person's immediate household to request the order.

After every suicide and public shooting, the first question we wrestle with is who could have stepped in to prevent the violent act. This bill would empower those who see a problem to seek a better ending.

Unfortunately, the bill is pretty unclear on what constitutes an

extreme risk and it would allow to the court system to remove property from someone who may never have been convicted or accused of a crime.

When an order is issued, the bill requires the person to be entered into the state Law Enforcement

Data System and the National Crime Information Center, whether or not they have done anything wrong. The order would last 12 months, regardless of the circumstances, and the person can only

request one hearing to terminate the order during that 12-month period.

The bill would also mandate a confrontation that could set off the very thing it is trying to prevent. If a person refuses to surrender their weapons, what then?

And at its worst, the bill may prevent people from seeking help for fear of repercussion through a court order removing their property. People may feel less inclined to speak to others about their problems when they are most in need of support.

Suicide remains a taboo subject, loaded heavy with unnecessary shame. At its core is mental illness, but access to firearms can escalate the threat quickly.

We only suggest the Legislature tread lightly when writing rules that so aggressively affront the Second Amendment, and don't consider the matter solved if this bill becomes law.

**If a person refuses to surrender their weapons, what then?**

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of publisher Kathryn Brown, managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, and opinion page editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

## OTHER VIEWS

# Complaints in senior care

The Oregonian, April 26

Few choices can be as wrenching as shopping for a care facility for an aging parent. The homes are expensive — but, if resources are available, who balks when it's a mom or a dad with increasing needs? Worse, the emotional challenge of the elder in moving to an institutional setting can be exhausting, even traumatic. What families typically count on throughout, however, is that the facility being considered reliably delivers the kind of care and attention that makes life worth living: safe, prompt, courteous, complete and at times fun.

That's why it's sickening to read that Sue Crawford's 93-year-old mother, Marian Ewins, was twice found by Crawford to be sitting in her own feces while a resident at a memory care facility in Tigard and in need of hospitalization. Or that a caregiver at a McMinnville assisted living and retirement center beat a resident's head against the bathroom wall. Or that a resident of a Eugene elder care facility apparently had a stroke yet waited for more than four hours before an ambulance was called.

None of the above events is disputed. Each was verified upon investigation. Yet none was reported publicly on a state-managed website designed to help Oregonians search for care facilities or monitor any from among the state's more than 600 facilities in which loved ones rise every day for a life worth living.

In an extensive report published last week, more than 60 percent of substantiated complaints against care centers in Oregon since 2005 — nearly 8,000 of them — go unseen and unknown to Oregonians searching the Oregon Department of Human Services website. This is a cruel failure, perhaps cruellest for its irony: The website was launched in 2008 in an effort to make transparent the complaint histories and performance

record of elder care facilities. It followed a drive by Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley as a member of the Oregon House of Representatives to publish such records online.

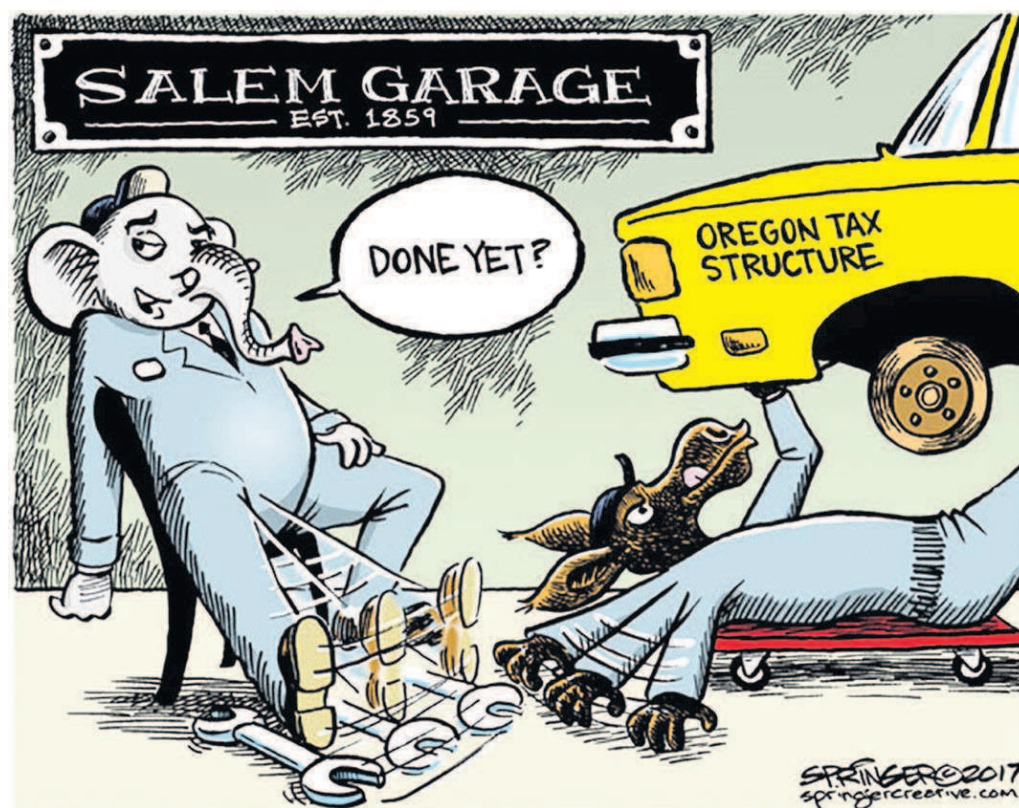
Ashley Carson Cottingham, since 2015 the director of the state's Aging and People with Disabilities program, said of the website: "It's a mess." That's true. The gaps in information owe to decisions made early on about certain classes of information to be withheld from the website, and also to mistakes in the way state workers classified complaints.

But elder abuse, whether from mixed up medications or neglect or outright physical violence, is equal opportunity when it comes to the historical record. The unpublished records of substantiated complaints, now available at OregonLive, should be promptly posted where they always belonged: on the state's website. And a good first step, until all records are available and current, would be to immediately post an explicit notice on the website saying the information provided by the website is incomplete.

In response to the work of the Oregonian/OregonLive reporters, state officials say the website will be replaced and fulfill the mission of making complete information readily available to Oregonians. Good. But that could take years owing to competing, expensive software projects within the agency.

Few priorities rise as this one does. Certainly there are corollary issues suggested by the reporters' findings, among them staffing and management practices within care facilities that leave such dark trails of abuse.

But for now the records, like an old person's life even in twilight, need fresh light. They should be made public by the state, with retooled practices to ensure they are current and useful to families trying to make what are often once-in-a-lifetime decisions.



## YOUR VIEWS

### Trump's American history worse than elementary student

Good grief! Where did Donald Trump go to high school?

He has his Jacksons mixed up. The one who fought in the Civil War was Confederate Major General Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson who, on August 28, 1862, encountered and attacked elements of the Union army, holding off several assaults until reinforcements arrived, then made a crushing Confederate flank attack at the First Battle of Bull Run, sending the Federals into retreat. He died in 1863 in the Battle at Chancellorsville.

The Andrew Jackson Trump refers to is "Old Hickory," a frontiersman who became the seventh president and believed that a "man of intelligence" needed no special training or experience to fill a government post.

Donald Trump appears to have about the same political view as Old Hickory, based on his arousal of emotion in common people rather than on principles. Recall the spoils system and Trump's White House personnel; or, his slogan "Make America Great Again," compared to Jackson's "Our Union, it must be preserved."

If Andrew Jackson is one of Trump's heroes, you might want to take a look at Bill O'Reilly's "The Patriots" written by David Fisher. Jackson was among people who loaned money to Aaron Burr who went West, after killing Alexander Hamilton in a duel in 1804, with plans to create his own independent nation. Burr was vice president under President Thomas Jefferson's administration. It is doubtful Jackson, when he became president, knew of Burr's plans.

Wasn't it Andrew Jackson who sent the Five Civilized Tribes on The Trail of Tears? And, as for Frederick Douglass, Trump may have him confused with Colson Whitehead, author of the best selling novel "The Underground Railroad." Do you think maybe he will get around to rescinding Harriet Tubman as the replacement of Andrew Jackson on the United States \$20 bill? Don't tell him.

I have John William Ward's biography of Andrew Jackson. Shall I send it to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue? Or, recommend Burke Davis's "They Called Him Stonewall?" Both are sympathetic biographies.

Dorys Grover  
Pendleton

### Support Crary in ousting Rep. Greg Walden in 2018

We would like to thank Jim Crary, Democratic candidate for Oregon's 2nd Congressional District, for taking the time to speak on May Day at BMCC with a large, engaged group of citizens. Jim lives in Ashland and is challenging the incumbent Greg Walden in 2018 for the privilege of representing this vast, diverse district that encompasses roughly two-thirds of the state.

Greg Walden purports to represent the people who live in the 2nd District. However, a look at who funds his re-election campaigns, available from OpenSecrets.org, tells a different story. Walden's largest donors are PACs — Political Action Committees organized around special interests. He receives approximately \$2 million, primarily from communication and electronics, the health industry, finance, insurance and real estate, agribusiness and oil, gas and electric utility PACs. Only \$27,000 comes from labor. This speaks volumes about who he is representing.

However, more troubling than who pays Walden to work for them is from where that vast sum originates. There are five major metro areas where this money is generated. The largest area is the Washington, D.C. area "swamp." He also receives money from the Portland area, Medford-Ashland, Eugene-Springfield and San Jose, Calif. Only one of these is inside the district he is supposed to represent, and only one-fourth of the funds generated for his campaign derives from his district. Again, who is he representing?

Walden's recent sponsorship of the ill-conceived TrumpCare bill to expel 24 million people from their health care access demonstrates how he honors those who put him into office. One third of the people

Walden is charged with representing would be affected by this draconian measure. Nevertheless, since Walden is raking it in with the insurance and health industries, he does not lose any sleep over the well being of his constituents, apparently believing that such a well-financed war chest and past name recognition will continue to buy him plenty of indiscriminate votes. And in the past this has worked for him. Well, no longer. We, the people of Oregon's 2nd District, demand and deserve far better.

Jim Crary, a retired attorney, will not take PAC money. Crary will depend on individual contributions. We urge everyone in the district to take a hard look at the policies of these two men then decide who is best suited to represent them in Congress, the one who works for corporations or the one who works for people.

Dale and Judy Wendt  
Pendleton

### Investing in emergency services will save lives

We have invested in our schools, outdoor swim pool, parks, city hall, and our hospital. I urge you to invest in our fire department. When you have a medical emergency, fire, or have an accident, they will be the first person who responds. It is time we invest in our local fire department.

It is a no-brainer for me. After taking a tour of the current facilities, it became quite clear this needs to pass. Please if you have decided to vote no, do your homework so that you have all the facts. Take a tour of the current fire station on Court.

Times have changed as so has medical technology. We need up-to-date equipment so that you can survive when you or your loved one have a stroke, heart attack, car wreck, house fire, etc.

When you have a house fire or are pulled from a car wreck, they need to have the best equipment available to free you and save your life.

The fire station needs a place to train its firefighters and volunteers.

Is your life worth the extra 14 cents per thousand on your home or rental? (One fancy coffee or latte a week.) Mine is and so are my loved ones. I want them to have the best possible chance to survive if they ever have to have a ride in an ambulance. I want our local firefighters to have the best possible equipment we can give them to do their job.

Join me in supporting the new fire station and equipment. Your life is worth it to me.

Deanne Sams  
Pendleton

### Station has been too old for too long, voters should replace

I am writing this letter in support of the fire department bond measure.

I worked at Pendleton Fire Department from 1964 to 1987. The station was five years old in 1964. They were just finishing the drill tower, which was built in the rear parking lot to save money but left no room for training.

That building was built with no room for growth and yet with the addition of the ambulance service within five years the need for storage, parking, living, office and training space tripled. I hope we don't make the same mistake with the new facility, and you won't if you vote "yes" on the May bond measure. The new building should last at least 100 years and more.

Back in the 1960s, '70s and '80s we had a lot more volunteers. We had 21 at the airport and 20 to 25 downtown. Nowadays no one wants to volunteer. One way is to use students from Blue Mountain Community College and the department is doing that. Those students studying for fire, police and medical degrees need to have field experience. The department, as the chief has emphasized, needs living quarters for men and women overnight so they can respond with emergency vehicles.

I would like to see my friends vote yes for the May bond issue. If it is turned down it will cost the city a lot more in the long run.

I am 85 years old and would like to see the new fire station built before I go into eternity!

Kenneth M. Garret, captain (retired)  
Pendleton

## LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.