

Wyden says GOP faces 'question of our time' on gun bills

By PETER WONG
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Wallowa County Chieftain/File Photo

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden said it's up to Republican colleagues in the U.S. Senate to show whether they are serious about federal firearms restrictions.

Democrat Sen. Ron Wyden says it's up to Republican colleagues in the U.S. Senate to show whether they are serious about federal firearms restrictions after two mass shootings this month in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas.

The Senate debated such legislation most recently in 2013, after the 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, claimed the lives of 20 children and six adults. But the Senate fell short of the 60 votes required to advance legislation without a filibuster, although Wyden and Democratic Sen. Jeff Merkley voted for it.

The Senate is now in recess for Memorial Day — and a group of Democratic and Republican senators began talks to see if there is a basis for legislation.

"That is the question of our time. You noticed how I approached it: The next 10 days are really crucial," Wyden told reporters Friday, May 27, in the lobby of the federal building where he has his Portland office.

"The question of common-sense gun reform is not an either/or proposition. We protect the right of gun ownership for law-abiding people, and we've got to have a new measure of safety to prevent gun violence."

Wyden himself has introduced or co-sponsored a list of bills. Among the proposals: Universal background checks for firearms purchasers, raising the age of possession from 18 to 21, restricting guns on campuses, banning assault weapons, and barring access to guns by terrorists, domestic abusers and others at risk of harming themselves or others.

"All of those would make a real difference in reducing the risk of these mass shootings, as well as tackling the reported increase of shooting incidents in our hometown," Wyden said. "We are not talking about something thousands of miles away."

Wyden discussed the issue at a town hall meeting in Keizer several days after the Feb. 14, 2018, shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, that claimed

17 lives and wounded 17 others.

The prospects for legislation are not high. The Senate has not taken up the issue since the failed votes in 2013. The Senate deadlocked 47-47 on May 26 on closing debate on a bill (HR 350) to improve monitoring, investigating and prosecuting domestic terrorism by the FBI, Justice Department and Department of Homeland Security. That vote was short of the 60 required to close debate, although Majority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York switched his vote to preserve the option of bringing it back.

The House passed two bills in March 2021, but neither is likely to pass in the evenly divided Senate. One bill (HR 8) would expand federal background checks on potential buyers to sales at gun shows and on the internet, not just those by licensed dealers. The other (HR 1446) would allow more time for federal law enforcement to conduct a check and close

the so-called "Charleston loophole," under which the shooter in a 2015 massacre obtained firearms although the check had not been completed within the required three business days.

After Uvalde: 'Enough'

Wyden spoke in the aftermath of the nation's latest mass shootings. On May 14, 10 Black people died in a supermarket in Buffalo, at the hands of an 18-year-old man motivated by white supremacist ideology. Ten days later, 19 children and two adults died at the hands of an 18-year-old shooter — who also died — at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas.

Wyden spoke on the same day that the National Rifle Association opened its annual convention in Houston, a few hours from Uvalde, with former President Donald Trump as one of the speakers. Wyden called it "a shameless gathering of death."

"Enough of our country being the only industrialized western nation that shrugs

its shoulders at the massacre of children," Wyden said in his opening remarks to reporters. "Enough of the clichés and excuses.

"Enough of letting those convicted of crimes hurting women and kids keep their guns.

"What other message could there be besides 'enough,' when this shameless gathering of death is being held only a few hours' drive from this week's school massacre?"

"There is a long and ever-lengthening list of atrocities that Oregonians know all too well."

Wyden specified the Oregon incidents:

- Thurston High School, Springfield, 1998: Two parents and two students shot dead; 25 wounded.
- Clackamas Town Center, 2012: Three deaths, including the shooter.
- Reynolds High School, Troutdale, 2014: one student dead plus the shooter; one teacher wounded.
- Umpqua Community College, Roseburg, 2015: Eight students and an instructor shot dead, plus the shooter; eight wounded.

'Can't put up a fence'

Wyden said Oregon has compiled a good record of state legislation in the past two decades. Voters

extended a requirement for background checks to purchasers at gun shows in 2000, and lawmakers did so for most private transactions in 2015. A red-flag law in 2017 allows family members and law enforcement to seek court orders if people are deemed at risk of harming themselves or others; the orders last one year. Safe storage requirements passed in 2021, under a law allowing school, community college and university governing boards to restrict firearms on campuses.

"But we can't put up a fence around our state," Wyden said.

Though Wyden isn't one of the senators involved in the latest negotiations, he said that as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, he is preparing to advance legislation to improve mental health services with bipartisan support. One

of those who testified to Wyden's committee earlier this year was a senior at La Pine High School, who also volunteers for a youth line — and who said there are not enough people to field calls and offer help.

For Wyden, the issue is personal. His older brother, Jeff, had schizophrenia and died in 2002 at age 51. His brother's struggles are described in "Conquering Schizophrenia," a book by Peter Wyden, their father, who died in 1998.

But Wyden also said improved mental health services must go hand in hand with stricter regulations on firearms.

"I just don't want anybody to walk away with the argument that (mental health) is somehow the entire solution," he said. "Most people with mental health issues are not involved in the kind of massacres we've seen."

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 - Giving a bad impression
 - Samsung laptops
 - Without (French)
 - Scientists' tool (abbr.)
 - System of one more computers
 - Captures
 - Authentic
 - Female mammal's nipple
 - Pandemonium
 - Satisfy
 - Arrived extinct
 - Shipborne radar (abbr.)
 - Network of nerves
 - Monetary unit
 - Showed old TV show
 - They help you hear
 - One who eliminates
 - Congress' investigative arm

- Parties
- Most supernatural
- Takes illegally
- Breathes while asleep
- Sea eagles
- German surname
- Looks at for a long time
- Solution for diseases
- Belonging to a thing
- Former Packers fullback
- Contemplative person
- One billionth of a second (abbr.)
- Helps
- Final section of the large intestine
- Invests in little enterprises
- Look for
- Unbeliefs
- Susan and Tom are two
- Female sheep
- A poet writes it
- Affirmatives
- "Full House" actress Barber
- Traveled rapidly
- Long upholstered seat
- Set wages
- Peter Gabriel song
- Sides of a jacket
- More beautiful
- Actress Kate
- Furniture with open shelves
- Indicate
- The cost of a room
- Gets rid of something
- Impudence
- No No No
- Drunkards
- Middle eastern country
- High energy lasers (abbr.)
- Primary component of ribosomes
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5		7			1			
5						9		
2	8							
4			8					3

Guess Who?

I am an actor born in Canada on June 9, 1961. I started acting at age 15, and later moved to Los Angeles at age 18. I am best known for various roles on sitcoms and as a time-traveling teen in a popular 1980s movie franchise.

CRYPTO FUN

Solve the code to discover words related to cats. Each number corresponds to a letter. (Hint: 18 = S)

A. 7 3 8 18 15 11 26 18
Clue: Sensory hairs

B. 24 4 7 18
Clue: Feet

C. 5 1 10 24
Clue: Leap off surface

D. 15 8 17 17 12
Clue: Nickname for a cat

KITTY CAT WORD SEARCH

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards.

WORDS

AILUROPHOBIA
CALICO
CAT
CATNIP
CLOWDER
DEWCLAW
DIGITGRADE
DOMESTIC
FELINE
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