

Wyden: GOP faces ‘question of our time’ on gun bills

BY PETER WONG
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Democrat 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, N.Y., and Uvalde, Texas.

The Senate debated such legislation most recently in 2013, after the 2012 shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., 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, Fla., 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,



Jacquelyn Martin/Associated Press

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., speaks about the child tax credit during a news conference, Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

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, N.Y., 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 for-

mer 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

Wyden backing 11 gun bills in current session of Congress

A list of firearms bills, compiled by his staff, that U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden has introduced or sponsored in the current session of Congress:

- Background Check Expansion Act would expand federal background checks to the sale or transfer of all firearms by private sellers, with certain reasonable exceptions.
- Background Check Completion Act would make “no check/no sale” the rule for firearm transfers by closing the Charleston loophole — the loophole in existing federal law that allows licensed firearm dealers to transfer firearms to purchasers when a background check is initiated but not completed within three business days, even when the buyer is not legally allowed to purchase the firearm.
- Protecting Domestic Violence and Stalking Victims Act would help to protect victims of domestic violence and stalking from gun violence by (1) adding individuals convicted of stalking misdemeanors to the list of prohibited persons who cannot purchase or possess firearms, and (2) expanding the definition of “intimate partners” to include dating partners, so that abusers would not be legally able to obtain a firearm regardless of whether they lived with their partner or had a child together (also known as the “boy-friend loophole”).
- Resources for Victims of Gun

Violence Act would establish an Advisory Council to help victims of gun violence — including survivors and the families, classmates and coworkers of individuals affected by gun violence — learn about and access the resources, programs and benefits that could help them meet a wide range of personal needs.

• Lori Jackson Domestic Violence Survivor Protection Act would close a loophole that allows a domestic abuser with a temporary restraining order to purchase a firearm. It would also extend protections to domestic violence survivors who have been abused by their dating partners.

• Gun Violence Prevention Research Act would authorize \$50 million in CDC funding each fiscal year for the next five years to study firearms safety and gun violence prevention.

• Equal Justice for Victims of Gun Violence Act would repeal the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act (PLCAA) that Congress passed in 2005 to shield gun manufacturers, distributors, and dealers from liability.

• The Safe Gun Storage Act would direct the Consumer Product Safety Commission to establish safety standards for firearm locks and firearm safes. These lifesaving devices are proven to prevent children, individuals who pose a danger to themselves or others, and unauthorized persons

from gaining access to firearms.

• Keeping Gun Dealers Honest Act would strengthen accountability measures for irresponsible gun dealers and provide the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) with additional resources for enforcement.

• Break the Cycle of Violence Act would provide \$5 billion in federal grants to communities that experience 20 or more homicides per year and have a homicide rate at least twice the national average, or communities that demonstrate a unique and compelling need for additional resources to address gun and group-related violence. The grants would be used to implement hospital-based intervention programs, evidence-based street outreach programs, and group violence intervention strategies.

• Ethan’s Law would create federal requirements for safe gun storage and strong penalties for any violations. Under this bill, gun owners would be required to secure their firearms in a “secure gun storage or safety device” if a minor is likely to gain access to the firearm without permission, or if a resident of the dwelling cannot legally possess a firearm. The bill also includes incentives for states to pass, and enforce compliance of, their own safe gun storage laws.

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 im-

proved 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.”

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL



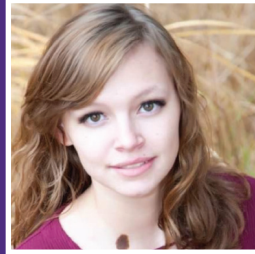
MORGAN KAY PELCHA

A MAN’S HEART PLANS HIS COURSE, BUT THE LORD DIRECTS HIS STEPS. PROVERBS 16:9

MORGAN KAY WE ARE SO GLAD GOD GAVE US YOU!

WE LOVE YOU! MOM & DAD

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL



KADENCE PARSONS

CONGRATULATIONS KADENCE!

WE ARE SO VERY PROUD OF YOU!

LOVE YOU, MOM AND DAD.

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL



GUS TERELING

WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU AND EXCITED FOR YOUR FUTURE!

LOVE MOM AND DAD

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL



SAVANNAH BROWN

WE ARE OVER THE MOON PROUD OF YOU!

LOVE YOU ALWAYS, MOM AND DAD

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL

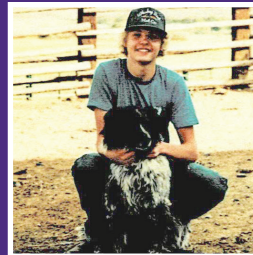


MEGAN HURLEY

CONGRATULATIONS! ENJOY YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE!

LOVE & HUGS, GRANDMA

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL



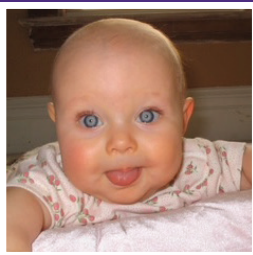
QUINTON JOHNSON

Q,

WE ARE PROUD OF YOU!!

FROM ALL YOUR FAMILY

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL



WE ARE SO PROUD OF YOU, SYD!

WE LOVE YOU, MOM, DAD, ELLIE AND DAHLIA.

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL



WELL DONE GAVEN!

WE ARE SO VERY PROUD OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!

WISHING YOU EVERY HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS ALWAYS.

BAKER HIGH SCHOOL



KELCEE BETH BAILEY

“THE NEXT TIME I HAVE TO COME IN HERE I’M CRACKIN’ SKULLS.” *THE BREAKFAST CLUB*

PROUD OF YOU! LOVE, MOM AND DAD