

Brecken

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He's been remembered as a good older sibling who included his brother in fun and games, and also as a "steadfast and devoted" friend.

"Brecken Boice was a bright and pure soul who brought so much joy to this world," reads his obituary. "He was so kind and beautiful and easy to love."

Brian Boice and his wife, Angela, are lawyers in Tacoma, partners at the family-run Boice Law Firm. Brian has practiced in civil litigation for more than a decade, but Angela took a less conventional route to the bar, working first as an assistant in her husband's

office until starting law school in 2017 and, last year, joining Brian as an equal partner at the firm.

Brian Boice said the family doesn't yet know if it will pursue litigation against Mt. Bachelor.

"We haven't made any determination that way. It's one of those deals," he said, his voice nearly trailing off. "We're emotionally crushed right now."

After returning to Tacoma from Bend, Angie Boice replied to a post on the Facebook page of St. Patrick Catholic School, where Brecken attended the fourth grade. She was mourning one son and watching out for the other, Toren.

"Toren is 89% sure that he wants to go to school tomorrow. Please remember that he needs to be a normal little boy right now," she wrote.

For now, the Boices are focused on maintaining their daily routines. They acknowledge this is next to impossible given the magnitude of their loss, but still, it's important to try.

"We have another son," Brian Boice said. "When you lose one son, you can't lose 'em both."

The family is not planning a memorial service. A GoFundMe page had raised nearly \$60,000 for the Boices as of Friday.

Reporter: 541-383-0325, gandreww@bendbulletin.com

Firearms in capitol buildings divide states after armed protests

BY IRIS SAMUELS AND LINDSAY WHITEHURST
Associated Press/Report for America

HELENA, Mont. — In the past year, insurrectionists have breached the U.S. Capitol and armed protesters have forced their way into statehouses around the country. But the question of whether guns should be allowed in capitol buildings remains political, and states are going in opposite directions.

In Montana, a law signed Thursday allows anyone with a permit to bring a concealed firearm into the Statehouse, reversing a decadeslong ban and fulfilling a longtime hope of Republicans who took control of the governor's mansion and the Legislature this year. GOP-dominated Utah passed a law this month allowing people to carry concealed weapons in its Capitol and elsewhere in the state without a permit.

Guns are allowed in statehouses in some form in 21 states, according to a review by The Associated Press. Eight states allow only concealed firearms inside their capitols, while two states allow only open carry.

Montana and Utah are two of at least 13 states that do not have metal detectors at the entrance to their capitols. The statehouses are open to the public even as many have closed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Several other states, though, are moving to restrict guns inside their capitols. In Michigan, where armed protesters forced their way inside the Statehouse last year and the FBI said it uncovered a plot to kidnap the governor, a state



Thom Bridge/Independent Record via AP, file

Protesters gather outside the Montana State Capitol on May 20 in Helena. A bill signed into law Thursday by Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte allows concealed firearms to be carried in most places in the state without a permit, and it expands the list of places where guns can be carried to include university campuses and the state Capitol.

panel banned the open carry of guns after the Jan. 6 riot in Washington, D.C.

Democratic state Sen. Dayna Polehanki said that "tensions are high" in Michigan following the assaults, and she's disappointed that concealed weapons are still allowed in the Statehouse.

"What they said is that weapons, guns, bullets are still welcome in our state Capitol as long as we can't see them. It doesn't make anyone safer," she said.

Vermont lawmakers, meanwhile, are considering expanding their Statehouse ban on guns to other government buildings. In Washington state, a measure that would ban open carry of guns in the Capitol and near permitted demonstrations has cleared a committee and is awaiting a vote by the full Senate.

"The purpose of openly carrying a weapon is to chill other people's voices. And it works," said its sponsor, Democratic state Sen. Patty Kuderer.

In nearby Oregon, crowds opposed to the Statehouse being closed to the public during a pandemic-related session stormed the building, including at least one person armed with an AR-15. And in Idaho, self-styled "patriots," anti-vaccination groups and others forced their way past police at the Capitol in August, shattering a window as they pushed and shoved into a gallery.

In Montana, though, Republican Rep. Seth Berglee said the U.S. Capitol riot didn't affect his thinking about the law he sponsored.

"People that have a permit are extremely law-abiding, and they are the type of people I would want to have around. I see them as being a deterrent to bad things happening," he said.

There's a similar proposal this year in Oklahoma, where gun rights advocates are again pushing to allow people with a license to carry firearms inside the Capitol. It hasn't yet had a hearing.

Guns

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With so many purchases, the state, which performs its own background checks, is backlogged. In 2019, there were 276,912 background check requests, compared to 2020 when there were 418,061 requests.

That backlog is mostly due to near hits on the National Instant Criminal Background Check System because of incorrect information, missing information or invalid government-issued identification or missing information, Capt. Timothy Fox, an Oregon State Police government and media relations officer, said in an email.

Jefferson County District Attorney Steven Leriche said he was not aware of increased crime being associated with increased firearm sales. But he did say there is a correlation between drug and alcohol use and gun ownership and serious crimes.

"Guns themselves are generally not my worry," Leriche said. "The combination of drugs being plentiful and guns being plentiful, that's a worry. We've had five murders so far and at least two involve a firearm."

According to the FBI data, there was a 44% increase in firearm background checks in Oregon from 2019 to 2020 and an 86.9% increase from 2015 to 2020.

Jefferson County Sheriff Jim Adkins said he preferred to have an armed citizenry, as it is difficult sometimes to get to someone in need and they can help themselves.

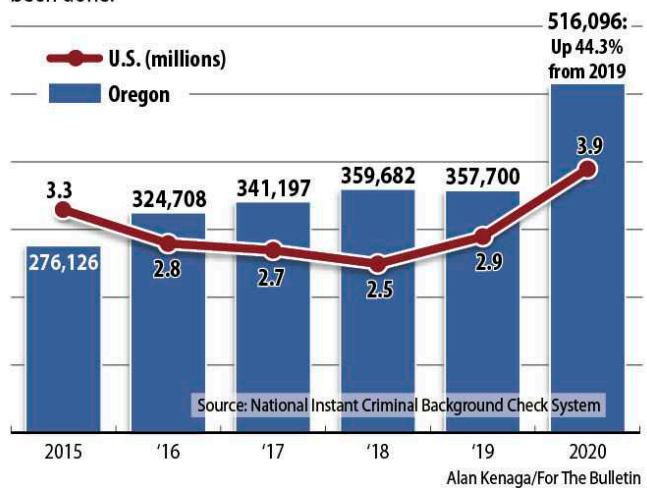
"Police cannot always be there at the moment they are needed most," Adkins said. "I always encourage citizens to be more self-reliant."

"Everyone should be prepared with food, water, warmth and self-defense, so they can handle any emergency on their own until help arrives. Sometimes help can be pretty slow. Especially a life-threatening event"

In Bend, at Hammer Down Firearms, not only are firearms

Federal firearm background checks

When a person tries to buy a firearm, the seller, known as a Federal Firearms Licensee, contacts the National Instant Criminal Background Check System electronically or by phone. The prospective buyer fills out the form and the NICS staff performs a background check on the buyer. That background check verifies that the buyer does not have a criminal record or isn't otherwise ineligible to purchase or own a firearm. Since launching in 1998, more than 300 million checks have been done.



Scott Wyke, owner of Hammer Down Firearms in Bend, straightens a case of guns while working at his store.

Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

with a nationwide movement that sparked violence in some cities, including Portland and Eugene. "All the riots started it," Wyke said.

selling rapidly, so is ammunition, said owner Scott Wyke. He agreed with Koch that customers are coming into the store looking for protection because of the recent civil unrest.

For months, protests persisted in Portland that were mostly peaceful. A march drawing several hundred was held in May in downtown Bend to protest the killing of George Floyd, who died after a Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck. The protest was held in conjunction

"Now it's the Democrats saying they're going to take our guns away and people are purchasing now. Ammunition is in short supply now."

Combined with demand are ammunition plant shutdowns or slowdowns caused by efforts to control the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

"Sales have been higher than I expected and it's mostly coming from first-time buyers," he said.

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Concealed

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The Oregon State Sheriff's Association also offers a cheaper, online version of the course, which is also NRA-approved.

Madrax firearms instructor Paul Sumner attributed the uptick to a "nonspecified fear." It's typical to see interest in concealed carry courses increase following the installation of new presidential administrations.

Sumner said some of the fear

is from residents worried about left-wing activists destroying property, but not all.

"I am seeing an uptick in people being concerned," Sumner said. "It's more of a general concern, and we've seen that before. But something that's truly not been expressed is how traumatic it has been for people faced with living through the pandemic."

In his "day job," Sumner is city attorney to six small Oregon towns, so he's familiar with social distancing requirements, he said. Prior to the pandemic, he

taught as many as 60 students in his monthly concealed carry course. Now, due to COVID-19, the classes top out around 12 people, though many more are interested, he said.

He doesn't think the backlog is leading to less safety, adding that one in two Oregon households have a firearm.

"Generally, we could all use more training," he said. "But I think, by and large, gun owners are law-abiding people and want to follow the law."

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