

Gun bills evoke strong emotions at Oregon Capitol

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

At age 24, Jenna Yuille lost her mother in a mass shooting at the Clackamas Town Center in 2012. Four years later, her father committed suicide using a firearm.

"I have now lost not one but both of my parents to gun violence," Yuille said. "I knew that my dad wasn't doing too well, but I didn't know how to help him."

A bill in the Legislature would provide a tool for families to block loved ones' access to firearms if they posed a risk to themselves or others.

The legislation would create an extreme risk protection order process. Families could obtain the temporary order — up to a 12 months — by petitioning to the court. The subject of the order could contest its issuance in court.

Once issued, the protection order could be renewed annually.

"What we're trying to do is provide the best course of action to give family a chance to help themselves to prevent their veterans and other family members from killing themselves, prevent suicide by cop and worse, killing family members in desperation," said Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas.

Oregon has one of the highest suicide rates in the nation, including among veterans, Boquist said.

Boquist's son, Seth Sprague, a 31-year-old U.S. Navy veteran, used a firearm to commit suicide Feb. 16, 2016. The tragedy spurred Bo-



Capital Bureau/Paris Achen

House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, left, embraces Jenna Yuille, regional manager of Americans for Responsible Solutions, after Yuille's testimony during a hearing on gun safety bills Monday, April 17, 2017, at the Oregon Capitol. Yuille's parents were both killed in separate incidents of gun violence.

quist to work with Senate Majority Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, to design legislation that could help families intervene when a loved one threatens to take their own life. The bill is modeled after a measure voters approved last year in Washington.

The National Rifle Association and local gun rights advocates are opposed to the bill.

"This bill allows for a protective order to take away your Second Amendment rights, not because of a criminal conviction or mental health adjudication but based on third-party allegations, using an evidentiary standard that falls far below what is normally required for removing a firearm," said Keely Hopkins, the NRA's Oregon liaison.

The bill also does nothing to stop someone from killing themselves in some other way or to provide treatment for the individual, Hopkins said.

Yuille knows the exact date her father, Michael Pasalacqua of Milwaukie, went to a gun shop and bought the firearm he used to kill himself. She found a receipt dated July 18, 2016, after his death.

"If I had known that a tool like the extreme risk protection order was available I would have used it, and my dad probably wouldn't have been able to go buy a gun that day," Yuille testified Monday, April 17, during a hearing on the bill in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

The bill is one of three evoking strong emotions from supporters and opponents.

Two other bills, proposed by Gov. Kate Brown, would close several gun purchase loopholes and study reasons for gun purchase denials.

One bill closes the so-called "Charleston" loophole that allows applicants to buy a gun within three days regardless of whether Oregon State Police has completed a mandatory background check on the buyer. Another bill bans people who have stalking convictions or boyfriends who have domestic violence convictions from having a gun.

"It is a common sense, life-saving bill that will protect Oregon's women and children by closing the boyfriend loophole, preventing convicted stalkers from buying and possessing guns and keeping guns out of the wrong hands by closing the Charleston loophole," Brown testified.

Opponents and supporters of the bills filled a meeting room and three overflow rooms to testify on the bill. Signs posted around the Capitol reminded visitors no guns are permitted in the building without a concealed handgun permit, and Oregon State Police had visibly enhanced security around the building.

Due to a scheduling error, the bills will have to be re-named and sent to the Rules Committee, according to a report by the Register Guard. Tuesday is a deadline for legislation. Anything that has not been passed out of a legislative committee by the end of the day is considered dead with exceptions for bills out of rules and revenue committees.



Contributed photo/Oregon State Police

An Oregon State Police trooper with an elk that was killed and left to waste. Wallowa resident Larry Harshfield, 69, was arrested on multiple counts of unlawfully taking and wasting elk April 8.

Man charged with allegedly killing, wasting a dozen elk in Wallowa County

By Steve Tool
EO Media Group

A Wallowa County man is suspected of poaching and wasting at least a dozen elk on his property — and perhaps 13 more found dead on adjoining land.

Larry Harshfield, 69, was arrested April 8 and charged with 12 counts of taking elk out of season and 12 counts of wasting elk.

The charges stem from a Feb. 11 search of the Harshfield Ranch, located in the city of Wallowa. During the search, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife troopers located 25 dead elk, 12 of which were located on Harshfield's property and 13 others were nearby.

The elk carcasses appeared not to have had any attempt to salvage meat from them, according to ODFW.

Harshfield was charged with poaching the 12 elk on his property and was lodged at the Wallowa County Jail. Additional charges for the 13 dead elk on the adjoining property will be referred to the Wallowa County District Attorney for consideration.

Mike Hansen, assistant district wildlife biologist for ODFW, said that the department can issue a kill permit or a hazing permit for elk that cause consistent damage to a farmer's crops. Hansen said Harshfield had contacted ODFW about the permits. The kill permit requires the farmer to field dress and skin the animal and take it to a meat processing facility.

"He did not want to do that," Hansen said. "We gave him a haze permit."

A haze permit does not allow for any killing of elk.

LEGISLATIVE BRIEFCASE

Bills reversing GMO pre-emption die in Oregon

Two bills that would have allowed local governments in Oregon to regulate genetically engineered crops have died in the Legislature.

Lawmakers prohibited most local governments from restricting seed in 2013, but Senate Bill 1037 and House Bill 2469 would have exempt-

ed genetically modified organisms, or GMOs, from that statewide pre-emption law.

Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, said he's decided to let SB 1037 die during the April 13 meeting of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee, which he chairs.

A legislative deadline previously killed HB 2469 in the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

There are still too many looming questions about the extent of cross-pollination of conventional and organic crops from GMOs and the efficacy of mediation aimed at promoting coexistence, Dembrow said.

The committee recently heard conflicting testimony about the frequency of cross-pollination among genetically engineered, conventional and organic crops.

While supporters of SB 1037 said they face market shutdowns from the presence of biotech traits in their seeds, opponents of the bill said very

few organic growers reported crop loss from GMOs to USDA.

No growers in Oregon have taken advantage of a mediation

program overseen by USDA to resolve GMO disputes, said Barry Bushue, president of the Oregon Farm Bureau, which opposes the bill.

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