



Vale District BLM/Capital Press

Boot camp students learn fire-line tasks.

## Women in Wildland Fire Boot Camp set for SE Oregon

By Brad Carlson  
EO Media Group

The U.S. Bureau of Land Management Vale District plans its annual Women in Wildland Fire Boot Camp over the Oct. 11-13 and Oct. 18-20 weekends.

Applications are due Sept. 6. Selection notification is scheduled Sept. 13.

Participants who complete the program over both weekends will be certified as wildland firefighters. They will be eligible to apply for seasonal employment or on-call positions.

Of the 20 participants who graduated in 2018,

about a dozen got firefighting jobs with land agencies or local departments, District Dispatch Center Manager Cassandra Andrews-Fleckenstein said.

Vale District BLM last year started offering the program, which the USDA Forest Service has used for about five years.

“We see a lot of women in our temporary and lower-level positions, but not a lot are staying in for management positions as often,” Andrews-Fleckenstein said. By increasing the number of women at lower levels, “hopefully some can make it into higher levels.”

The camp, held in a remote southeastern Oregon duty station, covers the basics of wildfire behavior, suppression, strategy, safety, equipment and tactics as well as incident management. Graduates apply for firefighting jobs in November and December. Before being officially hired the following June, they must walk three miles in less than 45 minutes while wearing a 45-pound pack.

Camp applicants must be 18 by June 2020.

Information: Andrews-Fleckenstein at 541-473-6295 or candrews@blm.com

## Gun storage advocates file petition

By Claire Withycombe  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Advocates are reviving efforts to require Oregon gun owners to securely store their guns.

Supporters filed an initiative petition Thursday, July 18, to bring the issue to voters again in November 2020 if the Legislature fails to pass similar legislation next year.

The petitioners — Henry Wessinger and Jenna Passalacqua, both of Portland, and Paul Kemp, of Happy Valley — want to reduce injuries and deaths associated with guns that have been accessed unlawfully, or by children.

Supporters filed a similar petition last year, but withdrew it after it became clear they didn't have time to gather enough signatures in support to get it on the ballot. They then advocated for lawmakers to pass a storage law this year.

But their idea collided with the legislative session's fiery politics.

A major gun control bill, which included the storage requirements, was killed as part of negotiations in May, when Senate Republicans refused to attend floor sessions in protest of a new business tax.

Gov. Kate Brown brokered a deal where majority Democrats would drop the gun bill and a second bill tightening vaccination requirements for public school students to get the Republicans to come back.

And when Senate Republicans walked out for the second time, spanning more than a week in late June, time was lacking to bring back the storage requirements as a standalone proposal.

Initiative Petition 40 would require that gun owners store their guns with a cable or trigger lock engaged, or in a secure container with a tamper-resistant lock. Specifications for the container would be established by the state's health agency.

Generally speaking, the petition's provisions would only be felt by gun owners after it became evident that a gun wasn't stored to the specifications in the measure: For

example, if a child obtained a gun that was not securely stored, and got hurt, the gun owner would be held liable.

Under the measure, a gun owner would be expected to report lost or stolen guns to police within 24 hours of learning of the loss or theft.

The measure wouldn't mean that police would go proactively into homes to check that guns are stored safely.

Henry Wessinger, who filed the petition in person Thursday, believes the bill can pass if it is its own bill in the short legislative session next year.

“While we were disappointed that we didn't get safe storage passed in 2019, we're not discouraged,” Wessinger said. “Because we think that we've built a really strong base of support, and are well positioned for passing it in the 2020 short session.”

Oregon lawmakers have a roughly five-monthlong session in odd-numbered years, and meet for up to 35 days in even-numbered years.

Safe storage is the House's top gun safety priority in 2020, a spokesman for House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said in an email to the Oregon Capital Bureau.

Proposing the ballot initiative is a sort of insurance policy — a backup plan in case lawmakers don't pass a safe storage bill in the 2020 session.

In order for the measure to pass next year, it will have to gain support from a majority of representatives and senators in each chamber.

Democrats hold comfortable majorities in each chamber, but not all of them have supported stricter gun laws in the past.

Wessinger believes the bill can get enough support.

He maintains a good share of Oregonians support the proposal, and that it's not a partisan issue.

When petitioners attempted to get a similar measure on the ballot last year, they commissioned a poll from Patinkin Research Strategies that showed 65% of respondents would have supported a measure “requiring firearms be locked up when they are

not being used and requiring the reporting of lost or stolen guns.”

Senate Republican Leader Herman Baertschiger Jr., of Grants Pass, said Thursday that he had not had a chance to review the initiative petition, but there is a possibility he could support some kind of safe storage bill.

“I certainly don't know what they would look like,” Baertschiger said.

Baertschiger said he believes more education would help keep children safe from accessing guns.

“I grew up around guns in our household, and kids were taught, ‘Don't touch guns, period,’” Baertschiger said. “No problem. When you were a kid, and you see a gun, you knew, don't touch it. ... I think we've lost some of that in our households ... we're not going to let our 6-year-old go out and run a chain saw, are we? Why would we let him have access to a gun?”

The National Rifle Association would likely oppose another storage bill, according to Roger Beyer, an Oregon lobbyist for the group.

The NRA opposed Senate Bill 978, the overall gun control bill.

That bill contained the safe storage provisions, with some key differences from the petition.

For instance, SB 978 contained criminal penalties for the gun owner if a minor obtained a firearm unlawfully, and the minor killed or injured someone, a provision that petitioners have removed from IP 40.

“We feel very strongly that we'd like to use a seat belt model of changing behavior,” Wessinger said. “The goal is not to penalize gun owners.”

Most Oregon gun owners store their guns in ways that align with the petition, Wessinger said. His goal is to encourage the remainder to do so.

Supporters must gather 1,000 sponsor signatures to get ballot language approved to circulate Initiative Petition 40.

The petition then needs 112,020 signatures to get onto Oregonians' ballots next November.

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