

# The Blue Mountain EAGLE

Grant County's newspaper since 1868

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

153rd Year • No. 9 • 16 Pages • \$1.50

MyEagleNews.com



## BILL WOULD ALLOW SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS TO BAN GUNS

**Entities could create rules prohibiting guns in their facilities, even for concealed handgun license holders**

By Dirk Vanderhart  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

A bill that would allow local governments, school districts and universities to prohibit handguns in public buildings is on its way to the Oregon Senate floor, following a tense committee hearing Thursday, Feb. 25.

Senate Bill 554 is the first gun control bill of the 2021 legislative session to move toward a floor vote. And in normal fashion, the measure drew intense opposition from gun owners.

Currently, anyone with a concealed handgun license in Oregon can legally bring their weapon into buildings, such as city halls, public university buildings, or public schools. SB 554 would not change that, but it would allow governments, school districts, ports and other entities to create their own rules banning firearms in their buildings.

Those bans would need to be made clear with signage and online notices. Anyone violating the rules could be subject to a class C felony.

SB 554 would also increase fees for applying for a concealed handgun license from \$50 to \$100, and the fee for renewing a license from \$50 to \$75.

In committee hearings and hundreds of pieces of written testimony, opponents of the bill argued that it amounted to an unnecessary infringement

on gun rights. Many pointed out that concealed handgun licensees need to pass background checks and must meet a range of requirements, including not having misdemeanor convictions within four years and no outstanding warrants.

Those requirements, opponents say, mean that CHL holders tend to be law-abiding citizens.

how those events end, and typically finds a relatively small percentage are stopped by armed citizens and unarmed citizens alike. The numbers behind the FBI reports are sometimes disputed by gun rights advocates.

"There's confusion about CHL holders and violent crime," Senate Minority Leader Fred Girod, R-Lyons, testified in a hearing Monday, Feb. 22. "There's a huge difference between the two."

Though SB 554 did not contemplate the Oregon Capitol, Girod said he and his wife routinely carry guns in the building, and would not stop. "I'll be damned if I'm going to be a sitting duck for a person who wants to come in and start shooting," he said. "It's just not right."

More generally, opponents of the bill have argued it will not make public buildings any safer, since people planning to commit violence would disregard any weapons ban. Gun rights advocates say the proposal instead will needlessly put law-abiding gun owners at risk of committing felonies as they encounter a patchwork of varying restrictions on where they can carry.

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PMG file photo

Hundreds speak out against gun legislation at a Senate hearing Monday.

Many people referred to claims that concealed handgun licensees are less likely to be convicted of a crime than police officers, though the data surrounding that comparison is fuzzy.

Others have argued that people with concealed-carry licenses are a last defense against criminals and mass shooters. The FBI tracks active shooter incidents in the U.S., along with



Eagle file photo  
Roy Peterson leaves Grant County Circuit Court in 2017 after admitting to violating the terms of his probation by illegally recording a conversation with his former probation officer. Two out of three convictions against Peterson related to theft were overturned by the Oregon Court of Appeals.

## Two convictions against Peterson reversed on appeal

Appeals court rules fire district could not have acquired vehicles in question before filing articles of incorporation

By Sean Hart  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Two out of three convictions against former Monument fire chief Roy Peterson have been overturned by the Oregon Court of Appeals.

The appeals court ruled Feb. 3 that the trial court should have granted Peterson's motion for judgment of acquittal on a charge of aggravated first-degree theft and a charge of possession of a stolen vehicle because the state did not prove that the Monument Rural Fire District owned the firefighting vehicles in question — and that the MRFD could not have owned the vehicles at the time of the alleged theft in 2013 because the district was incapable of conducting business until January 2014 when it filed articles of incorporation.

"Roy Peterson has maintained from the outset that his possession of the vehicles and equipment was in keeping with the law, and that the allegation by his accusers that his possession was illegal were false and contrary to the law," said Peterson's attorneys Benjamin D. Boyd and D. Zachary Hostetter of Hostetter Law Group in a statement. "We are pleased that the Oregon Court of Appeals has confirmed the legal position of Mr. Peterson."

The appeals court reversed the two convictions and remanded them to the lower court for resentencing. The appeals court otherwise affirmed the lower court's ruling, including a conviction on a charge of first-degree theft.

The charges stem from Peterson's acquisition of resources — money and equipment — for fire protection in Monument and his subsequent refusal to turn over the resources to the Monument Rural Fire District, which was formed by voters in November of 2012.

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## Senate Republicans stage one-day walkout to protest Brown's emergency order

Findley: 'Quorum denial' necessary to make a point, bipartisan work continues

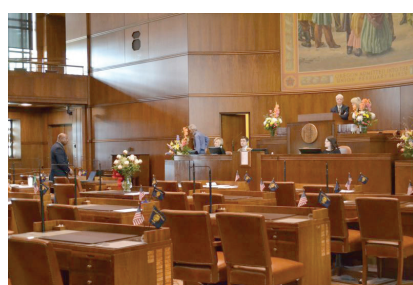
By Gary A. Warner  
Oregon Capital Bureau

A one-day Republican walkout in the Oregon Senate on Thursday was sparked by Gov. Kate Brown's announcement that she will extend the COVID-19 state of emergency until May 2.

State Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, said the GOP's boycott of Thursday's floor session at the state Legislature was about getting the Democratic party's attention.

He said it was not a "walkout," and more than anything else, it was a "quorum denial" to make a point that the Legislature needs to stop "messaging around" with gun legislation and other "recycled legislation."

"We need to fix the important things:



OCB file photo

Senate President Peter Courtney looks out over empty Republican desks in the Oregon Senate June 20, 2019. Senate Republicans staged another no-show on Thursday, Feb. 25.

get the kids back into school, get vaccinations in people's arms and get our economy back together," Findley said.

Nonetheless, Findley said his bipartisan work continues. He said he worked with Democrats all day Thursday in committees.

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