

# Gun storage requirement heads for vote

Trigger or cable locks, containers or gun rooms would be required

By Peter Wong  
Oregon Capital Bureau



EOMG file photo

**A cable gun lock. A bill being considered would mandate gun storage requirements.**

Another gun regulation bill is headed for a legislative debate and vote, this time in the Oregon House.

House Bill 2510, approved March 30 by the House Health Care Committee, would require the storage of firearms with trigger or cable locks, in a locked container or in a gun room. An offense is a Class C violation, which carries a maximum fine of \$500, unless someone under age 18 obtains access, in which case it is a Class A violation with a maximum fine of \$2,000. No jail time is imposed for violations. The committee vote was

6-4. All Democrats voted for it, and all Republicans against it.

On March 25, the Oregon Senate voted 16-7 to approve a bill making state buildings — including the Capitol — off-limits to firearms carried by concealed-handgun licensees. Senate Bill 554, which went to the House, leaves it up to local governments to

decide that question for their own buildings.

Oregon is among the states with no laws regulating gun storage, according to the pro-regulation Giffords Law Center. Laws in California and Washington apply to some aspects of storage.

When the House Health Care Committee heard the gun storage bill March 11, almost

400 pieces of testimony were submitted for and against House Bill 2510. Some people submitted more than one.

“We cannot gun-proof children,” Dr. Benjamin Hoffman, pediatrician at Doernbecher Children’s Hospital at Oregon Health & Science University, testified. “We must child-proof guns.”

Between 1999 and 2019, he said, Oregon averaged 3.5 deaths by firearms per 100,000 people, compared with the national average of 2.3 per 100,000. For youths under 19 during the period, he said Oregon averaged 6.3 deaths per 100,000, compared with the national average of 5 per 100,000.

“Gun violence is one of the leading causes of death for people my age,” Hope Williams, a volunteer with Students Demand Action in Oregon, said in a statement after the vote. “We want to feel safe at home

and in our communities and that starts with securely storing firearms to prevent gun violence.”

Students Demand Action, together with Moms Demand Action, constitute Everytown for Gun Safety.

“Even in a pandemic, our communities are continuing to endure gun violence everyday,” Elizabeth Klein, a gun violence survivor and volunteer for the Oregon chapter of Moms Demand Action, said. “And, unintentional shootings and gun suicides have continued to rise over the past year. Secure storage is an effective and easy way to help prevent these tragedies.”

But Oregon’s gun-rights advocates staunchly opposed the bill.

“This bill will subject hundreds of thousands of law-abiding citizens with potential criminal and civil liability overnight

for actions that are perfectly legal today,” Paul Donhefner, legislative committee chairman for the Oregon Hunters Association, said in testimony to the committee.

Kevin Starrett is director of the Oregon Firearms Federation, which bills itself as a no-compromise group on gun rights. It even disparaged Republican lawmakers working on regulation of firearms sales at gun shows in 1999, a year after the group’s founding. The bill did not pass, but voters approved a related initiative measure in 2000 by a 62% majority.

Starrett had harsher words for lawmakers during his committee testimony.

“Gun owners in Oregon have been remarkably well-behaved,” he said. “But if you keep rewarding criminals and punishing the law-abiding, don’t expect them to stay that way.”

# Governor: Fourth wave of COVID-19 hits Oregon

Most pessimistic forecasts from last month coming true

By Gary A. Warner  
Oregon Capital Bureau



PMG file photo

**Gov. Kate Brown, at a May press event, wearing her social distancing mask in public.**

COVID-19 infections are on the rise again in Oregon, a fourth wave of increasing cases since the pandemic began.

“This virus is at our doorstep — our numbers are rising and we are back on alert,” said Gov. Kate Brown at a Friday press conference.

A steep drop in infections since Jan. 1 had shown signs of bottoming out in recent weeks, but the most current data shows COVID-19 is again on the rise.

The April numbers are showing that the most pessimistic forecasts last month are coming true.

“The virus appears to be rebounding,” said Dr. Dean Sidelinger, OHA’s top infectious disease expert. “COVID-19 is a resilient enemy.”

OHA reports cases are averaging 392 per day, while hospitalizations are up and the percentage of tests that come back positive is 3.7%. That is still below the 5% level above which OHA has said growth of the virus becomes exponential.

The rise comes despite the arrival of three vaccines that can inoculate people from the virus. But only 18% of Oregonians are currently completely vaccinated, slightly higher than the national average.

OHA had hoped to have at least one shot of vaccine

given to every Oregonian over age 16 who wanted one by late May. Due to vaccine delivery issues, OHA is now looking at early June to reach the goal.

The state is getting an average of about 30,000 new shots of vaccine into people’s arms per day, though mostly the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines that require two shots spaced out over about a month.

OHA had been hoping for a surge of new one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccines. But the company announced this week that a subcontractor in Baltimore had improperly mixed ingredients, ruining as many as 15 million doses set to go out to states over the next few weeks.

Johnson & Johnson vaccines that are currently being given are not from this batch and are safe and effective, the Centers for Disease Control reported earlier this week.

Oregon has over 35,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccine available now, but it

will receive between 200,000 and 300,000 fewer doses than expected in coming weeks.

The inoculation campaign comes amid concern of the growth of new, more contagious and likely more lethal versions of COVID-19.

Researchers have found that those who are inoculated will most likely be spared severe illness or death compared to the unvaccinated.

“This is a race between the vaccines and the variants,” Brown said.

Washington will become the latest state to offer vaccines to everyone age 16 and above earlier than the federal May 1 deadline. Gov. Jay Inslee has announced all eligibility restrictions will be lifted April 15.

Brown said Oregon would stay with its current plans that would not lift restrictions until May 1, though some counties could petition to open vaccination to more people in the last week of April.

Oregon was fighting to

make vaccination equitable across economic and ethnic groups, Brown said.

“The goal of Oregon’s vaccination strategy is to make sure we are doing this fast and doing this fairly,” she said.

Brown announced that, effective immediately, people with several additional underlying medical conditions would be added to the advanced eligibility list, including smokers. A full list will be released by OHA.

The state will also allow workers who are currently eligible for the vaccine — such as farmworkers — to bring all adults in their household to be vaccinated at the same time.

OHA is also working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to create pop-up and mobile vaccination centers in rural parts of the state, including Morrow County.

Not on OHA’s agenda is any loosening of business restrictions.

OHA officials said they would be sticking with the four-tiered county risk level system, with the next changes announced April 6 to go into effect April 9.

The state has allowed

counties that recently dropped down a level but rebounded higher in the next period to hold off on reinstating restrictions during a two-week grace period.

Sidelinger said the same system did not apply to counties that had sustained lower infection rates for multiple weeks and are now rising again.

Deschutes County has been in the moderate risk range. But its rate of infections per 100,000 people was reported Monday at 99.5. If a county goes over 100, it is considered in the high risk category, and additional restrictions on gatherings, dining and other activities could be reinstated.

Among the issues that OHA is facing in its goal to maximize inoculations is what OHA Director Pat Allen called “a softening of demand” for vaccine among targeted senior groups, particularly in southwestern Oregon and portions of rural Eastern Oregon.

Sidelinger said evidence is beginning to show an unfortunate relaxed attitude toward mask wearing and social distancing as the warmer

spring weather brings people together.

“Mask use is going down, while travel is going up,” Sidelinger said.

A report on Friday by the New York Times of travel volume at airports included statistics showing Portland International Airport passenger traffic is up 43% compared to February 2020. Air traffic in Eugene is up 60%, while Redmond is up 62% and Medford is up 63%.

A CDC report this week said air travelers who wear their masks throughout a flight do not have an increased level of exposure to the virus.

Nationwide, just under 3 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine are being administered daily.

The pandemic has caused 129.97 million cases and over 2.83 million deaths worldwide, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center. The United States has had over 30.57 million cases and 553,691 deaths, the center says.

More information on the COVID-19 situation in Oregon and how to find vaccinations can be found at [getvaccinated.oregon.gov](http://getvaccinated.oregon.gov).

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