

DISTRICT 18

SW Portland
Tigard
King City



SENATOR GINNY BURDICK
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CHAIR:

Finance & Revenue

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& Economic Development

4/28/2011

Testimony for the Senate Judiciary Committee in support of House Bill 2797 amendments:

Good morning Mr. Chair, members of the committee. For the record I am Senator Ginny Burdick. I represent Senate District 18, which includes SW Portland, Tigard and King City.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to testify before this Committee regarding the proposed amendments to HB 2797. Specifically, I support language to close the loophole that allows Concealed Handgun License holders to bring loaded handguns onto school grounds.

Numerous Oregon public school districts, colleges and university campuses have existing policies that forbid CHL holders from bringing guns onto school grounds. Unfortunately, under current law, public schools may not have the support they need from Oregon statute to create gun free campuses. The concept described today would give them clear authority.

Private schools, on the other hand, are legally able to exclude all guns from school grounds. Shouldn't students attending a public school, such as Bridlemile Elementary, be afforded the same safety rights as students attending private schools?

Why is it important to prohibit all guns on school grounds?

There are numerous reasons why it is important to prohibit all non law enforcement officials from bringing loaded guns onto school grounds. Police officers are required to undergo hundreds of hours of training. CHL holders, on the other hand, are not required to undergo any law enforcement training. Instead, they can use a basic NRA or Hunter safety course to demonstrate firearm competency.

An NRA or Hunter safety course is nowhere near as comprehensive as the hundreds of hours of firearm training that law enforcement officials complete. In addition to rigorous firearm training, many law enforcement officers receive instruction in de-escalation techniques. For example, as of 2007, all operating personnel in the Portland Police Bureau must go through mandatory Crisis Intervention Training (CIT). This training deals specifically with how to de-escalate situations involving the mentally ill or developmentally disabled.

CHL holders are not required to go through de-escalation training. The impulse to shoot first and ask questions later in an emergency situation can be a powerful impulse, and de-escalation



training is essential to combat this tendency. If a dangerous situation arises in a classroom full of kindergarteners, don't we want people that are trained to de-escalate the situation?

Some argue that CHL holders would be able to assist if a school shooting takes place. But the evidence indicates, to the contrary, that CHL holders are likely to do more harm than good in such high stress situations.

Example #1: The Arizona shooting

In the recent Arizona shooting, a CHL holder nearly shot the hero who subdued the gunman Jared Lee Loughner. When Joe Zomudio, the CHL holder, initially saw the scene, he almost shot Bill Badger, the 74 year old retired Army Colonel who had physically subdued Loughner. After the event, Joe Zomudio stated, "I could have very easily done the wrong thing and hurt a lot more people."

Example #2: Virginia Tech

After the Virginia Tech tragedy, a review panel was convened by the Virginia Governor to analyze and review the situation. Here is an excerpt from the panel's findings:

"If numerous people had been rushing around with handguns outside Norris Hall on the morning of April 16, the possibility of accidental or mistaken shootings would have increased significantly. The campus police said that the probability would have been high that anyone emerging from a classroom at Norris Hall holding a gun would have been shot."

Survey of Campus Police Chiefs

A study published in the 2009 Journal of American College Health surveyed 413 College and University campus police chiefs across the nation. 86% of study respondents disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that "if students were allowed to carry concealed firearms on campus, it would prevent some or all campus killings."

"Fortunately, the vast majority of college campuses have policies that prohibit firearms on campus and most campus police chiefs recognize that allowing college students to carry concealed firearms on campus would not prevent firearm violence on campuses," the study concluded.

When dealing with crisis situations on school grounds, the safety of our children must come first. It is essential that only the most qualified and trained people respond. According to an article published in the New York Times:

"New York City police statistics show that simply hitting a target, let alone hitting it in a specific spot, is a difficult challenge. In 2006, in cases where police officers intentionally fired a gun at a person, they discharged 364 bullets and hit their target 103 times, for a hit rate of 28.3 percent, according to the department's Firearms Discharge Report.

In 2005, officers fired 472 times in the same circumstances, hitting their mark 82 times, for a 17.4 percent hit rate.”

If accuracy is this low for highly trained individuals, how can we expect people with little to no training to hit the correct target in a classroom full of young children?

Thank you for having a public hearing on this concept. Prohibiting all guns on school campuses is an important safety measure that should be a no brainer. Protecting our children should be our highest priority. Allowing untrained and unprepared individuals with loaded guns onto school grounds will not keep our children safe.