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Editorial

Keep handgun info accessible

The Oregon House of Representatives took a step in the right direction this week when it passed a bill allowing continued limited access to information pertaining to holders of concealed handgun licenses (CHL). The Senate will consider the bill in the coming weeks.

Some legislators, including state Rep. Kim Thatcher, have said that the public should not have access to CHL information, arguing that releasing such information endangers those legally carrying handguns. We are loath to understand that thinking: why would criminals seeking to rob someone's house or steal their identity, target someone they know to be packing a firearm?

This newspaper, and many others, have accessed information on CHL holders in order to report, for instance, that teachers with CHL permits are carrying handguns in the schools. That's information that parents of students should have access to in order to decide if that particular school district needs to change its policies in order to protect its students.

Proponents of banning all access to CHL info have framed this as an attack on the constitutional right to bear arms - it is not. That is nothing more than a red herring, an attempt to cloud the real issue: without access to nonsensitive government records the public cannot determine whether that government is working in its best interest.

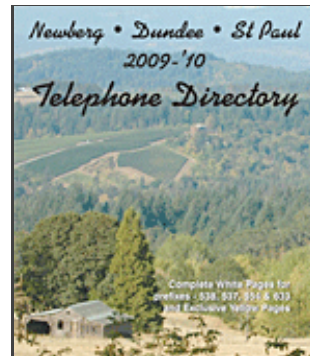
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