



The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

April 7, 2025

To: [Sen. Floyd Prozanski](#), Chair, [Senate Committee on Judiciary](#)

Re: [SB 697](#) – Age restriction on firearm possession – **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports SB 697 based on our position that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons constitutes a major health and safety threat to communities in our state. This bill prohibits those under 21 from possessing or transferring firearms with certain exceptions. Passage would allow Oregon to join the 22 other states that have raised the minimum age for purchasing firearms from 18 to 21.

The need for this bill is due to an alarming loophole in Oregon law. Current federal law already prohibits those under 21 from purchasing handguns, but under Oregon law they can still purchase semi-automatic rifles. This defies common sense for several reasons. Semi-automatic rifles have been used in the majority of school shootings. The average age of school shooters is 16, with the majority being male and under the age of 18. Also, according to Everytown for Gun Safety, “firearms are the leading cause of death for young people ages 18 to 20, and the firearm suicide rate among this group has increased 41% in the last decade. Eighteen to 20-year-olds commit gun homicides at triple the rate of adults 21 years and older.”

Science research has revealed that the developing brains of teens and hormonal changes make them more prone to risky behavior, since brain areas affecting impulse control, judgement, and long-range planning are the last to mature. Suicide prevention for this age group is a key goal. According to Giffords Law Center, “suicide attempts that result in death or hospital treatment peak at age 16 but are at the highest rates from age 14 through age 21.” The League would like the committee to reconsider the exceptions listed in the bill in view of the findings of a 2019 [study](#) using data from the National Violent Death Reporting System. “Although handguns were used in nearly three fourths of firearm suicides for the population as a whole, long gun use was relatively higher in rural counties and among adolescents. In rural counties, long guns were used in 51% of adolescent male suicides.”

Just as we set an age limit of 21 for purchasing alcohol and tobacco products, we believe we should do the same for firearms, which have the potential for much greater harm. The League urges passage of SB 687, and we thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Klein". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Barbara Klein
Acting LWVOR President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marge Easley". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Marge Easley
LWVOR Action Committee