

State Representative
Kim Thatcher
House District 25



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Gun Bill Misses Target But Provides Minor Protections

(Salem) “Our constituents deserve a bill that actually does what they asked us to do and not create the illusion that we followed their wishes,” said [State Representative Kim Thatcher](#) (R-Keizer, St. Paul, Newberg) on the floor of the Oregon House today. “In the end I don’t think we protected the individual.” Thatcher is the Chief Co-Sponsor of [House Bill 2727](#), which passed the House today on a vote of 54 to 4.

[The original measure prohibited the release of private information related to Concealed Handgun Licenses \(CHL\).](#) The [amended version](#) allows public bodies to release the records under certain circumstances. [State Representative Bill Garrard](#) (R-Klamath Falls) said the revised legislation does not prevent the release, it just sets up a few hoops the requestor of the records has to go through to get them.” He added, “it leaves a lot up to the discretion of the Sheriff or other government agency.”

There are an estimated 109,000 CHL holders in Oregon. Garrard displayed a box full of surveys from more than 3,000 gun owner in his legislative district who did not want their information released to the public. “The people in Klamath County want to have their concealed licenses and to keep it private.”

During the floor debate, Thatcher pointed out, “license holders did not ask to be put in the public spotlight...they did not ask to get police permission to exercise a basic civil right so they and their loved ones could feel safe.” She argued these documents should not be accessible to the general public without a court order or law enforcement purpose. “Government records should be about government programs, not whether a single mom living in a remote area of the state has a CHL to protect her children.”

[This issue came to a head two years ago](#) when a Medford teacher was harassed for having a CHL. The local paper attempted to get a list of all the local people with concealed handgun licenses. [While that case is on appeal](#), a group of Oregon sheriffs asked Representative Thatcher to work on a legislative fix. In 2007, the Oregonian obtained a list of all 12,000 CHL records in Multnomah County from the local sheriff.

Thatcher made it clear this is about public safety. “I don’t understand how any of this information about a private citizen is in the public interest? This information in the wrong hands can do a lot of harm.” She continued, “are we declaring open season for burglars looking to score or identity thieves hunting for their next mark?” Representative Thatcher is also concerned about the chilling effect this issue is having on people, “who were considering going in to get their CHL, but now they don’t want to run the risk of having their personal information exposed so they may just carry without a CHL.”

In the end, Thatcher voted for HB 2727 because it provided some minor protections for gun owners. Others were more skeptical. Oregon Firearms Federation Executive Director, Kevin Starrett, explained his group, “is not interested in a bill which will create the illusion of privacy protection without the reality.”

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