

HB 3188 Testimony

Good morning. My name is David Eatwell. I am the Economic Development Director for the West Columbia Gorge Consortium, which serves the cities of Fairview, Wood Village, Troutdale and Cascade Locks. I come here today to speak in support of House Bill 3188.

There are a number of reasons why I believe this bill is good for the economic health of my community and the state of Oregon:

1. *"Dedicated fund for the purpose of furthering economic development"* – It is difficult to protect targeted funds from the general fund monster even in robust economic environments. But when the economy tanks and budgets present harsh challenges, the cutting knife finds its way to the line item for economic development. While it is true that pulling the spark plugs out of your car's engine greatly decreases your fuel expenditures for the month, it also means that you won't be going anywhere in the near future. This results in prolonged stagnation.

This dedicated fund demonstrates a firm commitment to the future economic health of our community and gives the private sector the confidence needed to invest in the future.

2. *"Employ a person to manage the moneys"* – Multnomah County is challenged to meet the local needs of densely neighborhoods and commercial development, rural areas, and our small cities that form the transition zone. Local economic development gets lost in the general fund. Currently, the largest tracts of immediately developable industrial acreage in the West Columbia Gorge Consortium's service area are owned by Multnomah County. These are prime tracts with rail line frontage, mass transit service, fiber optic availability, abundant power, and easy freeway access via two interchanges. Yet, the County has no staff person whose only priority is the promotion and development of these and other assets.

The Consortium promotes these properties with no financial support from the County, as we are funded from the participating cities' general funds. Due to a lack of sufficient resources, it is difficult to do these assets justice. The local community would be better served if a dedicated economic development fund could be administered, either by county staff person or a contracted agency, to move these assets onto the tax base as developed industrial or commercial sites.

3. *"Moneys . . . may not be placed in the general fund of the county"* – This clause insures that these funds will be preserved with the original intent, to develop the economic health of the community.
4. *". . . shall file a report with the Oregon State Lottery Commission . . ."* – This annual report will also insure that the funds are expended to the maximum benefit of the community, though I would hope that, in implementation, a more precise set of metrics for success could be applied according to the needs of the local community.

You may have noticed that the word "local" has been a repeating motif. I feel that this is key to the maximum benefit to be extracted from these funds. Every local community has its own culture, history, momentum, set of resources, and needs that form the backbone of a successful plan. These funds should be disbursed locally, according to those plans that have been developed to meet the specific needs of the local community. This lowers the over-head expenses, allows for more flexible and quick response to acute needs, and a more precise distribution of funds for maximum benefit.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak for our communities.

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