

Statement of Support HB 4001

February 8, 2012

Co-Chair Holvey, Co-Chair Whisnant
House General Government and Consumer Protection Committee
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Co-Chairs:

Thank you for scheduling a public hearing and possible work session on HB 4001. This bill is important, whatever the eventual outcome. In the brief time available, let me explain the background and purpose of this measure.

As you know, legislative measures serve at least two purposes: awareness and action. I hope that this bill will engender voluntary change – at the least. Throughout Oregon we have cities, counties, and public service districts managing emergency operations centers (EOCs) during times of crisis and disaster. As public safety budgets are trimmed, volunteers are enlisted to fill the gap/s. This is a good, healthy, and honorable thing - make no mistake about it. We need, want, and benefit from volunteers. It is the lifeblood of the Emergency Management profession; it is something that should be encouraged.

However, there are cases - one in particular - where people that volunteer are the people that shouldn't be volunteering. We need to ensure the security of our EOCs. In some places social security information, personnel addresses, and even law enforcement information networks are accessible by people that have not been "vetted" through a formal background check. On the good/bad scale - this is bad. And while this is likely rare, it is an identifiable gap in our security protocols. It cannot be ignored; it must not be swept under the carpet of consciousness. There is a risk that will burn us at some point, if action - or actions - is not taken as a community of interests.

I realize that budgets are tight and there is no reason to reinvent the wheel. We do not want to create an anti-volunteer culture that will lose us more in the long-run than we gain. But we cannot simply pass by this problem without acting in some manner – allowing it blow up on someone down range is the definition of dereliction of duty. Accordingly, this measure is offered as a vehicle for communication and conversation: if passed it will likely be enforced in a manner that allows Emergency Management Professionals a tool to cull a bad-actor from the herd through a law that would be understood by volunteers as standard protocol.

More over there shouldn't be a new program built and staffed to enforce this law – because many organizations already do this as a matter of course. And if not passed, then at least we have had an opportunity to elevate this issue to the appropriate level - and shed some light on it. I am aware of the larger conversation at hand and hopeful that HB 4091 will also provide a vehicle for voluntary policy evolution.

This measure has already brought the matter before many groups and organizations in a manner that provided meaningful dialogue about our circumstances. In fact, the -1 Amendment reflects

sound policy and helpful improvement of the concept. I want to publicly thank the Oregon State Ambulance Association - and their lobby team. If this measure moves forward, it should do so with the -1 Amendments attached.

In conclusion, please understand that this measure is not offered to cause a financial hardship for any city, county, or district. It is not offered as a "one-size" fix for all, but rather as a call to arms for a problem that could hit us between the eyes if we aren't careful. In simplest terms, when I was in the field I used to remind my sergeants that I could lead our crew up any hill, through any circumstances... but I often forgot the bullets - and that we would only navigate the crisis successfully - if we did so together.

We cannot forget the bullets. We cannot allow this problem to go unresolved. We cannot turn a blind eye to the potential access of sensitive information to people that have not been thoroughly, formally, vetted through a background check. If you have questions about these comments and/or require additional information, please email me at paul@paulevans.org or call me at 503.949.6378.

Respectfully,



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