

***From the Desk of***  
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House Veterans' Affairs Committee  
Oregon House of Representatives  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Committee Members:

SB 1561 was offered with good intention, but I believe it is not yet ready for passage. It puts light on something that has been ignored for too long - but it is a "work-in-progress" not a final product. And given the time constraints associated with the brief 2012 Legislative Session - I ask you to table this for the time being. I also ask that a workgroup be established to study the opportunities inherent to a functional Oregon Homeland Security Council (or potentially - a renamed Oregon Emergency Preparedness Council) with an expectation to report back in 2013 with a legislative concept ready for passage.

First, I do not believe a smaller council is better. It did not work from 2005 to 2008 which is why we recast its form. The heavily "law enforcement" weighted nature of the council (as written) is insufficient for what we now understand to be the larger picture: homeland security is part of a larger emergency preparedness enterprise. Focusing upon the "bad guys" is critical, but it should not be a "stand-alone" activity. Moreover, the original statute created a state-only, state-centric body with little authority and even less practical value. SB 1561 as written, takes us backward, not forward.

Second, after TOP-OFF IV Governor Kulongoski wanted a proactive, all-hazards, "whole community" body that could/would consider potential policies strengthening our crisis mitigation, prevention, response, and recovery programming - with "buy-in" from our local and federal government partners, non-profit organizations, and the private sector. We built a structure to do that: but our execution failed. We had insufficient resources, staff, and a reactive philosophy imbedded in the Office of Emergency Management. Much of that has changed, but the impact of that reactive attitude echoes still. Offline I can/will share more information about the mechanics and specifics, but suffice to say we learned invaluable lessons that will help us build a better structure now.

Third, FEMA has recognized the value of private sector involvement in a state-level policy planning enterprise. Accordingly, there is more funding now for crafting a "whole community" approach than there was - even a couple of years ago. There is a model program that we believe an important baseline for us to develop. In 2010, some of us

visited with the "Be Ready Utah!" program managers, and last year - I flew to DC and met with the person (now at FEMA) that established it. That structure (similar to what we attempted in 2008, but staffed to succeed) has yielded tremendous benefits and secured future response/recovery capabilities. Most importantly, it developed relationships that are so critical during and after catastrophe. In simplest terms, Oregon can build upon that model for the benefit of the public: with limited costs, producing sustainable outcomes.

As I have stated on previous occasions, now that I am Citizen Paul (rather than a policy advisor) it is easier and more appropriate to share opinions and thoughts more freely. Well aware of the criticisms of the existing OHSC, I have lingering frustrations with former OEM Director Murphy and his inability and/or intransigence in making it work. He and his closest staff members worked hard to make it fail believing it a threat to their source of power (information). I have little forgiveness and even less understanding for putting sense of self ahead of the common mission. Political fiefdoms and turf wars prevented us from full implementation in the past: we can do better, and we must.

Included with this letter is a draft white paper prepared for Senator Boquist. It reflects the approach that most of us involved (in the past and present) believe necessary for the future. Whatever its name, Oregon deserves a strong whole community policy body that has functioning committees in line with FEMA programming (and funding). This is important and should not be "rushed through" the process of a brief session when there isn't a reason to do so. Let us measure twice (or thrice - if necessary) and cut once. It will eliminate confusion and provide us with the time to do this right - the first time.

Of the projects left unfinished, the OHSC remains the piece I am still the most passionate about. After the hard-won lessons of TOP-OFF IV and the real-world disasters (2007-2008) we tried to build a forum-style policy council that would provide guidance for the emerging all-hazards (whole community) approach for Emergency Management and Homeland Security. With the right staff and structure, a reorganized OHSC could/would provide the State of Oregon with an invaluable instrument for responsive and responsible public safety policy.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter. I truly believe you and your peers are working to strengthen our Oregon - and I hope that I can help you achieve that objective.

Respectfully,



Paul L. Evans, Citizen  
Oregon Homeland Security Councilmember, 2008-2011