

**Comments before the Senate Committee on Rural Communities and Economic Development  
Senate Bill 7 – Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center**

**Joel Zak ~ Zj Images**

**Chair for the Fine Art/Photography/Poetry and Calligraphy portion of Creative Living Exhibition at the  
Oregon State Fair - 2013**

**April 2, 2013**

Chair Roblan and members of the Committee, my name is Joel Zak. I am a professional photographer residing in Salem. My business is Zj Images and I am involved in many arts organizations in the area. I'm also the Chair for the Fine Art, Photography, Poetry and Calligraphy portion of the Creative Living Exhibition at the Oregon State Fair.

I am pleased to offer my support for Senate Bill 7 with the -2 amendment because it presents a path to a sound business solution that may ensure the Oregon State Fair's longevity.

I volunteered to become involved as an organizer for this year's Fair because I was incensed over the quality of the Creative Living event in 2012. In 2012 I was a very vocal opponent of the Fair and was quoted many times in several public venues where I successfully influenced many, many artists to boycott the Fair.

So how did I go from being such a vocal opponent to becoming such a proponent of the Fair? After the Fair I attended several public Fair meetings and I also met directly with assistant director, Lisa Van Leanne. On all occasions, her explanation of how the Fair's business model was completely untenable and how there needs to be a viable financial solution hit home. And while I wished that the 2012 Fair could have been handled better, it became clear that from a sustainable business standpoint, the Fair was nothing other than a race to the bottom and would have to be either resurrected or eliminated. I chose to lend my expertise and participate in its resurrection.

The Fair means many things to many people. For the adult Fine Arts community it is a terrific showcase for Oregon's talent. For students and youth it provides entry into that showcase but it also presents the opportunity to witness the larger world of how the business of art is cultivated and how success in the arts can be achieved. Take away that opportunity due to poor management and on several fronts all of Oregon loses. However, put the Fair on sound financial footing, and we not only support the arts and especially the business of the art in Oregon, but we also provide valuable training for young, business-minded artists in Oregon's future.

That's why I urge your support for Senate Bill 7 with the -2 amendment. Are there any questions that I may answer for you? Thank you for your time and consideration.