

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

Victoria Shinn

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Chair Roblan and members of the Committee, I am Victoria Shinn. I am pleased to offer support for Senate Bill 7 with the -2 amendment.

I support Senate Bill 7 which moves to establish a State Fair Council as an Independent Public Corporation, requiring that the State Fair remain on its current grounds, and to ensure the financial viability of the Oregon State Fair and the Exposition Center.

I have been employed over 26 years with US Bank, currently as a District Manager in Salem. I am speaking today on behalf of myself, a concerned Citizen and business person. Working at the Ladd & Bush Branch, I am trying to carry on the tradition of Community Involvement that my Grandparents started. The Oregon State Fair was an integral part of agricultural living and showing what was happening in the State.

I am a fourth generation Oregonian with deep roots in the Community. My Great Grandfather on my mother's side came by wagon train from Bethel Missouri settling with the Aurora Colonies in the mid 1800's. My Great Grandfather William Jasper Kerr was president of Oregon State University for 25 years in the early 1900's when it was Oregon Agricultural College, now OSU, and very instrumental in the growth of the Campus and the focus of Professional education.

My Grandfather, Robert Shinn, helped to establish Willamette Cherry Growers located next to the State Fair Grounds, now Oregon Cherry Growers, by recognizing the need for the Cherry Farmers to have an effective collaboration for processing of their crops.

I had always wanted to grow up on a Farm. We lived in town and the closest I was going to get to farming was in our back yard and enjoying the State and County Fairs. I grew up going to the Fair as many times as possible during its 11 day run. I spent countless hours with my family enjoying the Exhibits, Great Food such as Burton's Family Restaurant, Beautiful Gardens, Fischer Scones (at least twice that day!), the animals, farm families, meeting friends at the Horse Races and most enjoyable for me were the Horse Shows/Rodeos which had big name horse lovers the likes of Dale Evans and Roy Rogers.

I remember meeting Leo Spitzbart who was Manager of the Fair for years and a close family friend. There was great respect for the Fair and Leo. Once in Middle School, I could hardly wait to have my second job working the State Fair. This provided spending money, discipline of a 12 hour day, work ethics and more. I was working at US Bank when Jackie Winters decided she would have a "Jackie's Ribs" food booth at the Fair. I told her how much I loved the Fair and could I please work for her during those 11 days. I told her I loved it so much she wouldn't need to pay me! She laughed and said that was

not necessary and I was paid for my days of work. My experience at the fair was a memory I will always treasure.

My mother, sister and I attended the year round events frequently. Mostly the Morgan and Arabian horse shows which were very well attended by competitors and housed Regional shows for both breeds. Over the last 25 years, I observed a continued decline in the Horse shows. The exhibitors voiced loudly that the "State Fair" that ran the grounds year round, became increasingly difficult to deal with. That the facilities were not being kept up, and the Fair "Just didn't care". The horse shows stopped coming or have been minimal in attendance at best.

There was a solid renovation of the current Horse Stadium which is on the National Historic Register. I remember talking with an Organist from Oklahoma who was hired to play for the Morgan Regional show. His comment was how he had played all over the United States and had never experienced a treasure such as our Horse Stadium.

The State Fair and Expo Center can thrive if it is run by individuals who have the education, background and knowledge in running a profitable business and events. The positive impact by having a viable Fair and Expo continue in Salem would provide a strong economic impact for the local community as well as Regional. A strong Vision of the "Gateway to the Fair" would have a great impact on the revitalization of the Northgate community.

With over 60% of our economic income being derived from local Agriculture, it would be a tragedy to not continue what our State Fair Heritage was built from. A proposal, by the Marion County Agriculture Society in the 1860's, to permanently locate the State Fair to its current location and continue to provide the venue for education in agriculture, support in leadership development through FFA programs, current day innovations and family fun.

The downside of the continued financial instability of the Fair and Exposition Center is a complete loss of year round Economic Viability, our Heritage and Future.

In conclusion, as a concerned citizen, Salem Resident, business person who is looking for the Modern day viability of the State Fair and Expo Center, I urge your support of Senate Bill 7 with the -2 amendment.

Victoria Shinn
805 Harris St SE
Salem, OR 97302
Mail: PO Box 4700 Salem, OR 97302