

April 3, 2013

State Senator Ginny Burdick, Chair, Senate Finance and Revenue Committee
State Senator Larry George, Vice-Chair
State Senator Brian Boquist
State Senator Mark Hass
State Senator Diane Rosenbaum

RE: Please support SB 505 and the -3 amendments

Dear Chair Burdick and Senators,

I am Leslie Lewis and I served as a Yamhill County Commissioner for 12 years. I am here today, on behalf of one of my former constituents, Mary Holtan Meyers, to ask you to support the passage of SB 505 with the -3 amendments.

SB 505 will allow the Yamhill County Assessor to issue a refund to Mary Meyers for overpayment of property taxes caused by a county mistake. Yamhill County erred by requiring Mrs. Meyers' property to be disqualified from special forest assessment as a condition of approval for a partition under Measure 37. About 18 months later, the county planning department discovered the error, deleted the condition, stated it should never have been applied to Mrs. Meyers' property and the Assessor put her property back into special assessment. But Mrs. Meyers had already paid back taxes and three years of higher property taxes due to the county's error.

Mrs. Meyers requested a refund. Unfortunately, current law doesn't give the Assessor the authority to issue the refund, because the Assessor's Office didn't make the mistake. In June 2012, the Oregon Department of Revenue (DOR) also determined that the existing statute doesn't allow DOR to exercise their supervisory authority to order the refund.

Following DOR's ruling last summer, I asked Representative Kim Thatcher to arrange a meeting with the DOR Director Jim Bucholz to discuss Mrs. Meyer's situation. At that meeting, Director Bucholz and his three staff members all said that Mrs. Meyers deserved a refund, but the law wouldn't allow DOR or the Assessor to issue the refund. Director Bucholz suggested a legislative fix to Representative Thatcher and offered to have his staff work with her office on drafting a bill.

SB 505 is the result. I want to thank Representative Thatcher for working with Yamhill County on the specific language for this narrow bill. I also appreciate Senator George for helping get the -3 amendments drafted, which further narrow the scope of the bill.

I respectfully ask for your Yes vote on SB 505 as amended, so that the Yamhill County Assessor can finally give Mrs. Meyers the property tax refund that she has be due for many years.

Sincerely yours,



Leslie Lewis
former Yamhill County Commissioner (2001 to 2012)

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