



April 17, 2013

The Honorable Chris Garrett, Chair
House Committee on Rules
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Letter in Opposition to HB 3455

Dear Chair Garrett & Members of the Committee:

We appreciate the opportunity to voice our strong opposition to HB 3455, which would establish a process for electing boards of directors for county service districts.

County service districts, organized under ORS 451 ("County Districts"), are an invaluable tool used by many counties across the state to provide a diverse range of needed services to their constituents. County Districts are governed by the Board of County Commissioners ("Board") of the respective county in which they are located. HB 3455 seeks to remove the Board's voice in the governance of the County Districts. We believe this would significantly impair the delivery of important services within our respective boundaries.

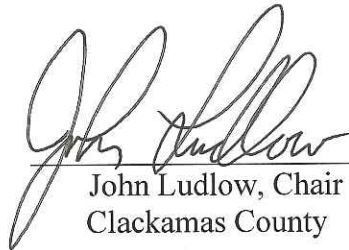
County Districts are often the means of providing economy of scale services that a city cannot provide alone, such as sewer service, regional recreational activities through parks, or funding to city libraries that also serve unincorporated residents. These districts allow for the provision of services that extend beyond city boundaries for the collective benefit of taxpayers through lower rates or costs.

The governance and leadership provided by Boards gives these districts the ability to see competing needs and balance priorities for the benefit of residents. It also allows the greater support of a county's resources in meeting the objectives of those districts. Neither of these benefits would be available to independent districts.


The bill seeks to remove the Board's voice in a decision on whether or not to convert a County District into an independent district and confusingly creates another kind of independent district when statute already provides for one. For example, you can have a county service district for wastewater treatment as both Clackamas and Washington County do under ORS 451, or you can have an independent wastewater service district under ORS 450. It is unnecessary to create yet another type of independent district when state law already provides for the same. The bill does not address how budgeting, management, or any sort of transition would take place and would result in a confusing process through which all parties would have to navigate. There already exists a clear mechanism to allow for the transition of a County District to become an independent district pursuant to ORS 198, a process that allows the Board of the affected county to have a voice in the decision; a voice that this bill seeks to remove.

For the above reasons, we believe that creating a mechanism to remove County Boards as the governing bodies of functioning, successful County Districts is inappropriate. Many County Districts have a long tradition of service and have built state- and nationally-known identities for the benefit of their constituents. These traditions of service have been built up with the trust and reliance of its constituent members, including local governments. We believe it would be a grave error to remove the voice of Boards from these decisions and would lead to a less effective and efficient government. Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



John Ludlow, Chair
Clackamas County



Andy Duyck, Chair
Washington County