



## **OPPOSE SB 300 -3**

### **Testimony of WaterWatch of Oregon In front of the Senate Committee on Rules June 5, 2013**

Founded in 1985, WaterWatch is a non-profit river conservation group dedicated to the protection and restoration of natural flows in Oregon's rivers. WaterWatch works to ensure that enough water is protected in Oregon's rivers to sustain fish, wildlife, recreation and other public uses of Oregon's rivers, lakes and streams. We also work for balanced water laws and policies. WaterWatch has members across Oregon who care deeply about our rivers, their inhabitants and the effects of water laws and policies on these resources.

#### **WaterWatch of Oregon opposes SB 300-3**

SB 300-3 amends existing law that governs commissions and boards so that, among other things, commission and board members "serve at the pleasure of the Governor". What this means is that the Governor can dismiss one or all members of a commission or board without cause.

WaterWatch strongly opposes this bill as it grants a Governor dangerous power to simply wipe out an existing board and/or commission for no reason whatsoever, or for that matter, for purely political reasons. We are especially concerned with the -3 provisions as they apply to natural resources agencies, which are especially vulnerable to partisan politics. The -3 amendments undercut the careful balance that the state has historically sought for our state's boards and commissions and could result in biased decision making bodies.

Moreover, the -3 amendments could also greatly undercut the substantive work of existing boards and commissions. At any given time boards and/or commissions have members with staggered degrees of institutional knowledge. To change the law to allow wholesale replacement of an existing board or commission could seriously compromise both the board/commission's ongoing work and that of the agency which with they are tasked with overseeing.

And finally, the -3 amendments allow for retaliatory dismissal of individual, or collective, members who make unpopular decisions. This is not good public policy and could, in the end, serve to suppress candid and transparent decision making by Oregon's state boards and commissions.

In a nutshell, this bill undermines the careful checks and balances that oversee our many state boards and commissions today. We urge the Committee to reject SB 300-3.

#### **Contact:**

Kimberley Priestley, WaterWatch of Oregon, 503.295.4039 x 3, [kjp@waterwatch.org](mailto:kjp@waterwatch.org).  
Jim Myron, Lobbyist, WaterWatch of Oregon 503.819.5589 [myrons@canby.net](mailto:myrons@canby.net)