

Friday, February 13, 2015

**Written Testimony before the
House Committee on Business and Labor
in Opposition to House Bill 2544**

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

The Association of Oregon Counties is strongly opposed to House Bill 2544. The bill would require binding interest arbitration following mid-term bargaining in strike-permitted units. At a minimum, HB 2544 would result in an increase in the number of interest arbitrations, and a limitation on a public employer's ability to implement mid-term changes. In a worst case scenario, HB 2544 may force public employers into a constant state of bargaining, or require public employers to surrender the ability to make necessary operational changes to a third-party arbitrator.

Included among the problems created by this legislation:

- Increased number of interest arbitration and a resulting substantial cost associated with the increased number of interest arbitrations.
- Significant reduction in the ability of a county to make necessary operational changes during the term of a labor contract.
- Shorter labor contracts and much more frequent bargaining, necessitating increased resources to meet the increased bargaining frequency. This almost assuredly leads to more contentious labor relations.
- While this might shorten the actual bargaining time for interim bargaining, in essence it will lengthen the period before an employer can implement any changes. The time for selecting an arbitrator, scheduling a hearing, followed by the time waiting for a decision, will vastly exceed ninety days.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2544. The Association of Oregon Counties strongly urges a NO vote on HB 2544.

Sincerely,



Rob Bovett
AOC Legal Counsel