

RE: HEARING ON H.B. 2050 AND H.B. 2181

HOUSE AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DATE: TUESDAY, FEB. 17, 8:00 a.m.

OREGON STATE CAPITOL, HEARING ROOM D

TO: Rep. Brad Witt, Chair, Rep. Susan McLain, Vice Chair, Rep. Wayne Krieger, Vice Chair,
Rep. Lew Frederick, Rep. Chris Gorsek, Rep. Caddy McKeown, Rep. Gail Whitsett,
Rep. Sal Esquivel, Rep. Greg Barreto

FROM: Al LePage, a citizen of Oregon offering the following testimony before the committee

To all members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak.

A few months ago I stood where Socrates defended himself to his Athenian citizens, where people voted in the Assembly of ancient Greece, and democracy as we know it was born in the dawn of western civilization.

Today I stand here to speak for democracy itself.

In essence the bills being considered here would allow counties to vote on "opting out" of an existing state law passed in 1994, in this specific instance Measure 18's section banning the use of dogs to hunt cougars for sport.

But my focus here today transcends the issue of hunting cougars with dogs as proposed, it has to do with the very heart of the democratic process, the right of the people to govern themselves.

Though the place the Athenians actually met as the Assembly is impressive, it's not the place, but what happened there in how they governed themselves that's significant.

Democracy in the Athens of ancient Greece was not limited to giving citizens of the Assembly the right to vote, in a very real sense, the People governed themselves, debating and voting individually on issues great and small, as today's initiative and referendum process in Oregon allows our own citizens to propose measures and vote them into law.

And as any citizen of the Assembly of ancient Greece could, at any time, propose a change in the laws, in a similar way, Oregon's initiative process allows for the repeal of an existing law, and pertinent to today's hearing, Measure 34, which sought to repeal Measure 18 in 1996, was defeated and defeated by a significant majority of the voters.

Given all this, the will of the majority of Oregonians is clearly evident both as Measure 18 in creating the existing law and the failed attempt to repeal it through Measure 34.

One of the important principles of Athenian legislation was that the laws of Athens were to apply to all citizens equally. If counties or any jurisdictions are allowed to "opt out" of existing Oregon state laws, either Measure 18 or otherwise, then the accepted norm of any state law being universally applied throughout the state to all its citizens becomes meaningless.

Therefore, if these bills continue to move forward, if these or any such opt-out bills were ever passed and actually signed into law, then it would set an unacceptable precedent, the democratic process itself jeopardized, and the phrase "We the People" would also become meaningless.

And so, I have to see as the proper course of action, opposing these bills, indeed, opposing bills of any such kind, that would essentially begin to erode the very foundations of Oregon's democracy.

As a citizen of Oregon, I'm asking you all to consider the serious implications these "opt out" bills could have relative to existing state law and the democratic process in Oregon for generations to come.

Thank you.

TESTIMONY PREPARATION: The text of this testimony utilizes a significant amount of sentences and phrases directly and primarily from the source properly referenced below, as well as other sources of information; gathered, edited and adapted by myself to craft this testimony for today's hearing, and I make no original creative claim to any of it other than I have duly noted here.

PRIMARY RESOURCE REFERENCE: Christopher Blackwell, ed., Demos: Classical Athenian Democracy (A. Mahoney and R. Scaife, ed., The Stoa: a Consortium for Scholarly Publication in the Humanities), website accessed on February 14, 2015. followed by the date on which you accessed the site. (Proper citations for each individual article, including the date of the article's latest revision, are given in each article's footer.)

Athenian Democracy: a brief overview , Christopher W. Blackwell, edition of February 28, 2003
[http://www.stoa.org/projects/demos/article_democracy_overview?
page=1&greekEncoding=UnicodeC](http://www.stoa.org/projects/demos/article_democracy_overview?page=1&greekEncoding=UnicodeC)

Athenian Democracy: Legislation
[http://www.stoa.org/projects/demos/article_democracy_overview?
page=7&greekEncoding=UnicodeC](http://www.stoa.org/projects/demos/article_democracy_overview?page=7&greekEncoding=UnicodeC)