

April 2, 2015

The Honorable Chip Shields, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Jennifer Williamson, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety, Members

**Re: SB 5531**

As a former prosecutor, I had the distinct pleasure of working with the Oregon State Police (OSP) for several years in prosecuting felonies, misdemeanors, and fish and game cases. I was always impressed with the level of training, professionalism, and dedication exhibited by all of their Troopers. I urge your Committee to provide OSP with dedicated funding so they do not have to eliminate positions, especially in the Fish & Game Division.

OSP's mission is to "enhance livability and safety by protecting the people, property and natural resources of the state" and they have done so despite the lack of a dedicated funding source. I saw firsthand how this hampered OSP's ability to provide consistent service to the citizens of Oregon—especially in rural areas where coverage by local law enforcement was minimal at times.

For example, I prosecuted cases where an intoxicated driver collided with a victim in rural Hood River, Oregon. Only OSP had the resources to send Troopers to multiple cities; complete the investigation and create a crash reconstruction diagram to explain to a jury what exactly happened. Such complex cases can only be investigated by a statewide agency with the necessary resources that come from a dedicated funding source. I urge you to provide a dedicated funding source to OSP so they can continue to provide their high quality service to Oregon citizens and not be subject to shifting budgetary whims.


**OSP Fish & Game**

Furthermore, OSP Fish & Game provides a vital service in placing Troopers in the most rural parts of Oregon in order to protect the natural resources of our state. Often alone and encountering individuals who are armed; these Troopers ensure that our natural resources are used appropriately and often end up investigating a wide variety of criminal activity.

In 99% of the illegal hunting and fishing cases that I prosecuted; OSP was the only investigating agency. The ability of metropolitan and rural law enforcement agencies to investigate fish and game cases is extremely limited and well known to poachers. I appreciate the time and risks that OSP Fish & Game Troopers take on a daily basis to ensure our safety and the natural resources of Oregon. It is a disservice to our state to not continue protecting those resources with consistent funding. Additionally, OSP Fish & Game Troopers often act as patrol troopers when necessary—thus saving the state money by not having to hire game wardens (like other states) and additional patrol troopers. Without a stable funding source, the Legislature will force a 25% reduction of the OSP Fish & Game division. This means that the Legislature has decided that Oregon's natural resources are fair game for poachers. Oregon has a long history of protecting its natural resources and OSP's Fish & Game Division is an essential component of those conservation efforts.

Clearly the problems related to funding of the Oregon State Police could be better resolved with a dedicated funding source. I urge your Committee to solve the problem as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

  
Respectfully submitted,  
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