

Testimony Opposing HB 3444
April 2, 2015

**Chairperson Clem, Vice Chairs Helm and Post and Members of the House Committee
on Rural Communities, Land Use, and Water**

My name is Gerritt Rosenthal. I am member of Oregon Wild, the Wilderness Society, and the Sierra Club. I have been a wilderness wanderer and activist, and occasional hunter/fisher, for over 50 years. I live in the Tualatin area. I am an active member of the Central Committee of the Democratic Party of Oregon and have been involved in Platform and policy issues. My comments today are my own and do not represent an official statement the DPO, its Platform Committee, or the Washington County Democratic Party or any of the other named groups. Nonetheless, the Democratic Party of Oregon 2014-2015 Platform, Article 6.6 states "We oppose the wholesale conversion of public lands to private ownership and support the protection of federally designated parks, wilderness areas, recreation areas, and other resource lands". This Platform plank was crafted, in my opinion, to show clear opposition to any legislative attempt to "privatize" public lands *en masse*, by whatever mechanism, something that this bill clearly is aimed to do.

I am astounded you would be having a hearing on this bill since it doesn't even pass the laugh test for many reasons. I will try and be brief however.

First, to the direct point that the State of Oregon cannot require the US Government to transfer lands, so the wording is totally improper. The most Oregon would be able to do is file a frivolous lawsuit making this claim. Oregon was admitted as a State in 1859 at a time when the US Government clearly had control over non-privately held lands in what is today Oregon. There was no provision in the award of statehood that all federal lands would become lands of Oregon.

More importantly is the fact that this bill is a bald-faced attempt at a land grab by private resource companies with no regard to overall public benefit. Oregon clearly does not have the resources to manage all federal lands for multiple use, and as Section 2 (3) clearly envisions, most of these lands would be sold to private interests and a simple "sop" in the form of 5% for the Common School fund would be allowed. The bill does not even include a provision for economic or public benefit evaluation before land transfer, and so the residents of Oregon would suffer greatly. Two simple examples suffice: 1) The reversion of Crater Lake and Oregon Caves from National to State park status would mean far lower tourist revenues. Foreign visitors overwhelmingly visit National Parks...not State Parks. 2) The conversion of BLM rangelands to private ownership (because the state could not manage them) would raise grazing fees for all ranchers who could not afford to buy huge tracts of land.

The concept of this bill is morally and ethically wrong since it assumes that Oregon should have the right to dispose of lands that ALL Americans have enjoyed for the past 156 years (since statehood). This bill is unconstitutional, illegal, and anti-American, and it is a total waste of the precious time this legislature has to even hold a hearing.

We are all aware that the federal management system is not always optimal or efficient, but it has served many of us (both the general public and many private landowners, but excluding native Americans) quite well and has resulted in a complex and highly useable mosaic of protected uses including wildlife refuges, recreation areas, parks, monuments, cultural lands, geologic and scenic features, range lands, grazing lands, timber lands, historic sites, etc. This bill doesn't even mention the words "cultural values", "geologic", "scenic value", "historic", "public benefit", or "habitat" in Section 3.

Finally, in perhaps an absurd oversight error, Section 3 (F)(3)(a) discusses the "procedures and requirements for subjecting public lands to property taxation." Why would the State tax its own public lands?

HB 3444 is so silly, so anti-Oregonian, and so anti-American it did not deserve this hearing.

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