



PETER COURTNEY  
President of the Senate

**Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction**

Representative Tobias Read, Co-Chair  
Senator Fred Girod, Co-Chair  
Representative Val Hoyle  
Representative John Huffman  
Speaker Tina Kotek  
Representative Greg Smith  
President Peter Courtney  
Senator Richard Devlin

*TESTIMONY BY SENATOR PETER COURTNEY  
SUPPORTING SB 5005  
MAY 8, 2015*

Co-Chair Tobias Read, Co-Chair Fred Girod, members of the Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction, thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Peter Courtney. I am a State Senator. I live in NE Salem. Testifying in support of Senate Bill 5005.

When the Spring Break Quake rocked the Capitol on March 25, 1993, we learned how vulnerable we were. The Legislature sought expert advice and were presented with a 5-phase plan to retrofit the Capitol and make it safe in the event of a major earthquake. The first phase, strengthening the rotunda, was completed in 1994 but the rest was never done.

Every study, every report says this Capitol will crumble in a major earthquake

Every year hundreds of groups come to the Capitol. Legislative Administration tells us that 235,000 people visit here each year, including 20,000 school children. Last Thursday, nearly 850 visitors packed our halls as part of Home Education Day and Citizen Lobby Day – in 1 day.

This week more than 1,000 school children have visited here.

Students from **Pleasant Hill** in Lane County; and **Sutherlin** in Douglas County;

**Dallas** and **Independence** across the river in Polk County;

**Portland** and **Beaverton**;

**Wilsonville**, **Canby** and **Damascus**;

And from as far away as the Grand Ronde Academy in **La Grande**.

One of the groups yesterday included more than 100 fourth-graders from Boones Ferry Primary School in Wilsonville, including Margaret Imholt, daughter of my chief of staff.

And that is just this week.

Every year for three weeks in the holiday season, the rotunda of the Capitol is filled for four hours in the middle of the day with school choirs singing. Hundreds of children performing -- hundreds of parents watching and listening.

During session, approximately 700 men and women work in Capitol offices and 1,000 people total occupy our halls and committee rooms. Our staffs, the lobby, visitors and members of the public who come to testify on legislation are all in danger.

I have heard some worried about “the optics” – how it looks for the Legislature to make its own workplace safer. Here’s the truth: Your offices in the wings are relatively safe. What’s not safe are the public spaces – the areas where Oregonians congregate for tours and hearings and other events.

This is the people’s building. It belongs to the people of Oregon and we are its stewards. The Oregon Legislative Assembly is responsible for the Capitol – not DAS, the State Treasurer, the Secretary of State or the Governor. That makes us, the members of the Oregon Legislature, responsible for the safety of the people who work and visit here ... for the children.

We know what’s wrong. We know how to fix it. We have a plan developed by citizen volunteers.