

May 19, 2015

To: Members of the General Government Subcommittee of the Joint Ways and Means Committee  
From: Janice Thompson, Oregon resident  
Re: Suggested amendment to Section 1, HB 2019

I support all but Section 1 of HB 2019 and offer the following to serve as the basis for an amendment regarding selection of members of the Oregon Government Ethics Committee.

This suggestion is informed by my work from 1998-2012 as executive director of the Money in Politics Research Action Project, then Democracy Reform Oregon, and finally Common Cause Oregon. My day job is no longer in the democracy reform arena, however, and I write only for myself.

I understand that the primary focus of Ways and Means hearings is financial so my apologies for bringing this policy concern to your attention. I don't track state legislation much these days so I did not attend the policy committee hearings where Section 1 of this bill was amended. I am troubled enough by the current version in the A-engrossed version of HB 2019 to take some time off work and ask for your consideration of an alternative.

Matters related to local governments comprise quite a significant portion of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission's work, a fact that is typically lost due to media focus on legislative or state administrative scandals. For this reason I suggest amending Section 1 of HB 2019 so that nine members of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission are appointed in the following fashion.

- The governor would appoint one member
- Legislative leadership would suggest 4 members
- The governor would appoint 4 members from a list of 8 prospects with two names each provided by the boards of the League of Oregon Cities, Association of Oregon Counties, Oregon School Board Association, and Special Districts Association of Oregon.

The first bullet point is a reduced number from the current process which complies with a key goal of HB 2019. The second bullet is current practice and should not be expanded because there is a greater history of legislative ethics scandals than administrative branch ethics problems. The third bullet point ensures local government input which is lacking in current practice and in HB 2019.

Another way to look at this is that even though the number of public officials in the legislative branch is much smaller than the number of public officials involved in local government or in the administrative branch, legislators would have the most control over the composition of the Oregon Government Ethics Commission. The approach I suggest corrects this imbalance.

The most important parts of HB 2019 are Sections 2 through 5 and it is critically important that the tighter review timelines are accompanied by additional resources for the Oregon Ethics Commission. To keep those sections of HB 2019 moving it may be prudent to move Section 1 into another bill to facilitate more discussion. If that is not feasible, I submit that the original version of HB 2019 is better than the current A-engrossed version of this bill.