

Ralph S. Thomas, P.E. (retired)
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Dear Mr. Brennan

ABSOLUTELY NO ON SENATE BILL1573

We own a home in Wheeler, Oregon, an incorporated City on Nehalem Bay, population about 400. The whole city of Wheeler is built upon a steep slope and the hummocks from a major landslide which occurred between 200 and 2000 years ago.* Geologists recommend limiting housing density proportional to hillside steepness. Reacting to special interests for high-density development and ignoring the cautions of the geologists, the City of Wheeler adopted land use densities that conflict with the geologist's recommendations and allowed development to proceed without further consideration of these cautions. Partly as a result, the City of Wheeler now has three major landslides within its limits, including two active FEMA landslides, one of which threatens existing residences. The City spends a disproportionate amount of its meager revenues on legal fees to "protect" from claims instead of improving its infrastructure – roadways, storm water abatement and landslides to name three.

A few years ago, the citizens of Wheeler recognizing the problem passed Voter Annexation by a whopping 82% in favor. Shortly thereafter, the City supported an application for annexation of a large amount of property which includes an active landslide. Voters wisely said no. The Citizens, much to the chagrin of the City, have become the watchdogs and last vestige of responsible and reasoned judgement against special interests. The City should not be allowed to expand its boundaries in a geologically difficult environment especially given its past history and performance without first amending its zoning laws to follow the recommendations of geologists.

Voter's Annexation has been a valuable and perhaps the only tool available to all Wheeler citizens to bring about responsible decisions for the future of the City. If SB 1573 were to become law, this recourse could be taken from the citizens as special interests, even though a small minority, would prevail as high density development on steep slopes would continue.

Sincerely,

Ralph S. Thomas, P.E. (ret) /s/

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