

## Independent Scientific Review SB 198 Talking Points

- We support objective and reliable scientific review; however, we do not believe SB 198 will deliver on that promise.
- With current budget constraints, this is not the right time to make this investment. As a threshold matter, the Oregon natural resource agencies have received noticeable budget cuts over the last decade. In some cases, those budget cuts happened even as state revenues increased. Any discussion about the need for a new or increased level of scientific review and analysis should also acknowledge the lack of state investment into programs, universities, and agencies that are already charged with providing such “independent” scientific review. If this effort isn’t funded appropriately, it will fail to deliver unbiased information.
- Even with proper funding, eliminating bias and achieving consensus will be extraordinarily difficult. Given the difficulty of eliminating perceived bias, we are highly skeptical that this process will produce any kind of consensus around answers to politically charged “high impact” questions.
- “Independent Scientific Review” could leave out necessary expertise. The proposed ISR board and processes may fail to balance and effectively leverage diverse expertise on the issues they are convened to resolve. For instance, each board member serves at the pleasure of the Governor and it’s impossible to ignore the possible influence the governor’s office may have on the outcome of “independent” review. We are also concerned that the “Independent Scientific Review” contemplated by the Task Force will effectively ban all subject matter experts who have ever received funding from, or been employed by, agencies, industry or NGOs. While this may help achieve the goal of striking an “independent” review board, it may come at the expense of relevant expert analysis.
- The need for another governor appointed board is not clearly understood. The natural resource agencies already have voluntary boards and commissions appointed by the Governor that are designed to provide oversight and deliver balanced results from agencies. Those same boards and commissions should also be ensuring that the scientific review from the agencies is complete and unbiased. It is hard to imagine adding another layer will produce a different result.
- SB 198 does not provide checks and balances to ensure that scientific review is done independently in an unbiased way. The bill language fails to provide the board with direct oversight, limits to discretion, performance standards, legal obligations or overall best practices for scientific review. All of which should be clearly defined if the legislature intends to pass this bill.
- Ultimately, this board will become like all the others, another place for special interest advocates to pursue changes to public policy by seeking the endorsement of a board appointed by a political office.

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