

Before I explain my reasons for opposition of this measure let me thank Senator Girod for courageously bringing the matter of the state bird to the Senate for the first time in Oregon History. I emphasize courageously because it can be politically dangerous to meddle with long traditional symbols that represent affinity and potentially deep seeded emotions. If you doubt this talk to people in the south about confederate themed flags or even people who attended Roseburg High School. Symbols can bring people together and tear them apart.

This bill lays out a laundry list of valid reasons why the Meadowlark should no longer be our state bird. I am very familiar with these reasons because I used virtually the same list in a petition based attempt to change the bird to the Duck in 2014. Sadly this new bill is as much an indictment of the Meadowlark as it is a testimonial to the Osprey. He points out that “the Legislative Assembly never formally adopted the Western Meadowlark”. I have attached 2 exhibits that show the meadowlark was never adopted at all, formally or informally. ORS CH 186 and Governor Paterson's proclamation of 1927.

In fact, by having this public hearing today this is the first time any member of the legislature will have officially acknowledged for the record, existence of the actual document that the Meadowlark relies upon for “de facto state bird status”. The proclamation has been waiting more than 89 years to be seen by the legislature. One can now say that our proclaimed state bird has finally made it to the legislature so that the deliberative body can now decide its fate.

I present the Proclamation as both an oversight and a piece of unfinished business. In the final paragraph, Patterson clearly knew the difference between proclamation and statute. He knew that his proclamation was a temporary stop gap just to address the issue until the legislature could ratify or quash. In July 1927 it would be a year and a half before the next session. Patterson did not give the proclamation to the legislature at the beginning of the session and he died in office without getting his proclamation ratified. There is no state bird in ORS CH 186 and until today this matter has been waiting to be heard by you in this official public hearing.

According to the proclamation 80,000 participated and 45,000 chose the Meadowlark, think about the logistics of doing that poll in 1927. The Oregon Audubon Society had made the effort to ask kids to choose between: Western Bluebird, Varied Thrush, Oregon Junco, White-crowned Sparrow and Western Meadowlark. Where and how many Oregonians have voiced support for the Osprey? Nowhere in the bill does it quantify the affinity of the Osprey with Oregonians. Oregon has over 400 species of birds, as legislators shouldn't there be a supporting SIG for the nominee instead of picking one that you think is appropriate primarily because it is not the Meadowlark? Senator Girod of Stayton has authored the first ever, joint resolution on a state bird, he and a cosponsor is nominating just the Osprey. His arguments are sound, most Oregonians have never seen a Meadowlark and 5 states have the same state bird. The Osprey is a good and logical choice.

The thing is, only one state, OREGON had a bird naming contest for school children. Kindergartners from 1927 today are at least 95 years old. I would speculate of the 80000 Meadowlark Oregonians, those still alive and living, their number would be in the hundreds. Of them the number that actually remember participating in the poll is very small and rapidly approaching zero. To find an actual “Meadowlark Oregonian” would put a face to what many see as a trivial issue. Oregon is a special place with a rich history. The things we do as a people are not trivial, they are what define us and illustrate our values. If we want to make a change don't we owe it to our citizens to acknowledge our proud history of asking our children or citizens on this matter?

The "Oregon" thing to do would respect the past and embrace the future, let Meadowlark be voted down, ratified or given the chance to stand for re-election as incumbent against Osprey, Duck or whatever, in a new poll of Oregon schoolchildren.

As written, I oppose SCR 18 because it ignores and disrespects the rich history of our current "de facto", unofficial, unratified, unoriginal, unseeable(in western oregon) State Bird the Western Meadowlark. Furthermore out of respect for the Oregon Audubon Society and the mostly dead 80,000 "Meadowlark Oregonians", now that you have taken delivery of Patterson's Proclamation you should either ratify it, vote it down or do something worthy of a state that "flies upon her own wings".

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PS

I am planning on attending and will testify if given the opportunity.