

SB 543 Children's Districts

Chair Hass and Members of the Committee

The Oregon Women's Rights Coalition considers the welfare of children an important issue. Forming a separate district to provide for children's activities, however, raises some concerns. The proposed legislation would allow a separate district to be formed for children's activities. The bill, however, does not follow ORS statutes for the number of signatures required for petitioning for a district. Current ORS 198.755 requires 15 percent of the electors to sign for creation of a district. This legislation reduces that percentage to 10 percent.

In Washington County the signatures required for a petition to create a children's district would be 53,547 under current law but 35,697 under the provisions of the bill.

In addition to those concerns if the district is formed, dollars for this district would go to funding elections for board members rather than programs.

While property tax dollars for education have been protected it seems in this legislation, general government services are not.

Creation of a new district sharing the general government portion of our property tax system could have the effect of decreasing the dollars available for public safety, fire, and in some areas parks where those are under the auspices of cities.

Until our property tax system is reformed, any additional "government" entities created should be closely examined to make sure that the services the "government" proposes to provide could not be provided under existing private or non-profit programs for the same population.

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