



2/25/19

Re: Opposition to SB8

Senator Fagan and Members of the Senate Housing Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you the position of the Oregon Land and Water Alliance (OLAWA) on SB 8.

OLAWA is a 501c3 non-profit group based in the rural areas surrounding Sisters, Oregon. OLAWA advocates for the protection of our land use laws and sustainable water policies while educating ourselves and our fellow citizens about current issues relating to these important matters. OLAWA actively monitors, analyzes, and raises awareness of issues affecting residents and visitors in Central Oregon.

SB 8 would have the effect of stifling the enforcement of Oregon's land use laws. Unfortunately, local governments throughout Oregon are often heavily influenced by development pressures and sometimes make decisions in violation of state law. Groups such as ours are left to pursue litigation when our legal analysis determined state law has been violated.

The possibility of receiving an adverse ruling is nearly always present in any enforcement action. Different judges can disagree, which is why we have the multiple layers of appeal in our system. This bill simply

limits access to that system for small, low budget groups such as ours. Please remember that judges can already dismiss frivolous lawsuits, early in the legal proceedings. Stacking the deck against small, low budget groups such as ours is counter to Goal 1: Citizen Access. The pursuit of justice and legal enforcement should not be impeded based on one's limited budget.

Land use decisions affect all Oregonians, including those many thousands represented by 1000 Friends, Water Watch, OLAWA, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, the Oregon Natural Desert Association, Northwest Steelheaders, Trout Unlimited, COLW, etc.

The thousands of unrepresented vacation homeowners, hikers, commercial and recreational fishermen, hunters, beachcomers, windsurfers, birdwatchers, mushroom gatherers, boat owners, rock climbers, and nature photographers, as well as all other private citizens must be entitled to equal participation in all government affairs that affect them. By imposing a threat of requiring attorney fees in the event that they receive an adverse ruling, this bill eliminates their voices.

This bill is a wrong step in the wrong direction.

Please let this bill die in committee as it should.

Thank you,



Eva Eagle, Secretary, on behalf of
Oregon Land and Water Alliance