

From: chuck50fis@aol.com
To: [Exhibits HAGLU](#); anna.freitas@oacd.org
Subject: HB 2958
Date: Sunday, March 10, 2019 8:58:13 AM

House Agriculture and Land Use Committee,

The following is a letter that I submitted when HB 2958 was previously scheduled for a hearing in February.

"I am writing in regards to HB 2958 which seeks to amend the rules on the qualifications on who can run as a director of a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

Basically it seems this change does away with the concept of zone directors (residency in the zone and land management or ownership) in the >50,000 populated counties, and makes all positions at large.

I would say the idea of having zone directors is to:

1. have a representative that lives or works land in the zone and so has some connection to the land and people living there.
2. by having or working land one has a vested interest and an intrinsic connection and responsibility to the care of the natural resources on that land. (I do not mean to say that non owners or non managers cannot be connected to the land or feel responsible for the care of natural resources, just as having a vested interest can sometimes be at odds with being responsible and caring for the resource.)
3. representative government works best when there is a balance of interests

I can see that in a very urban or high cost land area owning 10 acres might seem to exclude a large portion of the population, but the current rules allow 2 (and maybe more) at large directors who do not have to meet the land or management criteria. This seems fair to me. Perhaps the amount of land is too large, however I do not believe that eliminating the rule for the zone directors is the appropriate response at this time. It seems very important to have some land owners involved.

I am an associate director with the Hood River SWCD, however I am writing as just myself as our SWCD board has not had the opportunity to meet to discuss this bill or its ramifications. I do acknowledge that the changes would not apply to HR County. I would urge the committee to not move forward with this legislation until the problem is presented and this issue is vetted statewide in a none hurried way with SWCD's from around the state having an opportunity to weigh in on this matter."

I am glad to see that there is more discussion concerning this bill. I stand by my earlier comments and offer two suggestions if there is deemed a need for change: Increasing the number of at large directors, lowering the acreage to qualify as a zone director.

Thank you,

Chuck Gehling
Hood River, Or