

From: [Susan Altman](#)
To: [Exhibits HAGLU](#)
Subject: Testimony on HB 2958 for 3/12
Date: Sunday, March 10, 2019 1:59:47 PM

To the House Committee on Agriculture and Land Use:

By way of disclosure, I am a director on the Deschutes Soil & Water Conservation District. I am submitting testimony as an individual, however, not as a representative speaking on behalf of the District.

I am opposed to HB 2958.

It is important that each District maintains the zone system in order to ensure geographic representation of their District. What is important to constituents in one zone may not be the primary issue for constituents in another zone. Take, for example, the issues of water quality and quantity, wildfire prevention and management, and wildlife management. Arguably, each of these issues is important. In Deschutes County, our zones represent a wide range of geographic and environmental diversity. Many rural properties are in heavily forested areas adjacent to National Forest land and do not have water rights and/or are not used for farming; in this zone, wildfire prevention may be the primary concern. Another zone is comprised of high-value farmland and is farmed using seasonal irrigation water; here, water quality and quantity is the primary concern. Rural residents who live on well water are scattered throughout the district and those residents are also concerned about water issues. A zone may have within its boundaries wildlife migration zones, and that may be of utmost importance to the constituents who live or recreate in the area.

As a director elected to represent my zone, I feel it is important that I understand the issues specifically related to my zone and to act in the best interest of those concerns. As a landowner who manages my own property, I understand the time, effort, hard work, and love of caring for the land that goes into a rural livelihood. It is important for the zone directors to meet the qualifications of land management and stewardship that are criteria for eligibility for office.

There currently exists a means by which a landowner who doesn't meet the acreage or management requirements may be a board director; that path is through the at-large position. The at-large directors are able to run for office without meeting the requirements of a zone director. There is no blanket prohibition on candidates who do not own or manage the requisite acreage.

Other means by which a person can contribute to a District is through associate directorship; or, one may volunteer to assist with administrative duties.

The eligibility requirements are in place to ensure that those with experience in land stewardship contribute to the management of a District's priorities. To eliminate the requirement for such experience and knowledge would potentially put stewardship in the hands of those with no experience and/or an agenda that does not serve in the best interests of conservation.

The process of HB 2958 has been reactionary. To consider any changes to eligibility, ODA, SWCC, and OACD should be consulted for input and this should be a thoughtful and considered process that weighs all relevant associations and departments.

Thank you.

Susan

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Deschutes County Soil & Water Conservation District

Zone 4 Director, Board Secretary