



House Committee On Veterans and Emergency Preparedness  
Chair Evans and members of the committee

RE: HB 4041 reorganizes several departments of emergency preparedness and response

WE ARE A STRONG NO

This bill is way too involved and extensive to deal with in a short session. It renames and transfer duties making it impossible for in-depth analysis for best practices.

This bill has the stated aim of increasing cooperation and coordination between state and local emergency response personnel but it has the potential to damage that coordination as much as improving it, with the standard fog involved with creating new agencies, publishing their guidelines and getting systems and communications in place between them and the other agencies they need to be in immediate and effective communication with. A change this large should have had prolonged public input but the planning which led to this bill appears to have taken place only over the last six months, and among a fairly small group without coordination with and input from all local emergency response personnel.

This grows Oregon government very noticeably, creating two new State Departments (Emergency Management and Fire Marshal) from offices previously subordinate to other agencies, growing the Oregon Homeland Security Council by 7 members, and creating two new advisory councils: the Local Government Emergency Management Advisory Council and the Emergency Preparedness Advisory Council. Is this degree of growth and reorganization truly required?

The justifications listed are:

1. The Department of State Police's difficulty in returning to 1980s trooper staffing levels while managing ever-increasing wildfire operations with a subordinate office of fire marshal and the Oregon Emergency Response System
2. The Oregon Military Department's difficulty in handling both the recent wartime deployments and its subordinate office of emergency management functions.

These sound plausible on the surface but there are reasons for concern:

1. It removes authority for specific response types from the agencies which have possessed the specialized knowledge in those areas for several decades: transferring nuclear emergency response from the Department of Energy which has had authority for nuclear power and nuclear waste emergencies for decades to a new department, and transferring public health and quarantine emergencies from the military which has had specialized knowledge and training in this area since the chemical weapon use of World War I.
2. It moves the Oregon Homeland Security Council from the office (now to be Department) of Emergency Management, to the office of the governor. This move alone is enough to oppose this bill: the current governor of Oregon as well as the immediately previous governor, have established reputations for corruption and non-transparency. Moving any state functions to be under the immediate control of the office of the governor could be described as a self-inflicted wound and this bill has the possibility of disaster of biblical scope.

There are already 7 amendments aimed at addressing some of these concerns. This bill needs the time of a long session for legislators to be able to absorb the information from and the motivations of all involved parties.

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