

I'm Ron Byers. I live outside Tillamook on acreage abutting the Tillamook State Forest. Decisions that the Board of Forestry board members make have a significant impact on my life. Many people residing in our coastal communities feel the same way. Before I support what people say or do, I want to know if they have a financial stake in their position. Experience has taught me that personal gain colors judgment, and while that might work in some settings, it shouldn't when it comes to managing public assets. What if the public good is inconsistent with one's livelihood or profession? That's called a conflict of interest because it interferes with sound, neutral decision-making.

SB 335 proposes to remove more of the conflict of interest from the Board of Forestry. It's coming at a critical time because the Department of Forestry is facing unprecedented challenges: budget shortfalls, wild fire implications, revision of forest harvesting practices, habitat conservation areas for endangered species, and more citizens calling for more focus on drinking water, carbon storage, and eliminating toxic mixes of pesticides in our forests.

Most public arena settings try to remove conflicts of interest when needing to make solid, long term decisions. They strive to eliminate self-interest because it narrows options, and often appears inconsistent with the good management of public resources.

SB 335 reflects that our world is changing, and we need a Board of Forestry with more diverse backgrounds and skills. Many Oregonians have the ability and qualifications to serve. We need to know that decisions are based on how the public can best benefit, all things considered, and not for the financial gain of a particular industry or Wall street holdings. We want to hold decision makers accountable through the Governor, and SB 335 accomplishes this. I urge the committee to support this bill. Thank you.