

March 18, 2021

To: Senate Rules Committee

From: Lee Mercer

RE: Support for SB 261, SB 262, SJR 3 and SJR4

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Girod and Members of the Senate Rules Committee,

For the record, my name is Lee Mercer, I am a retired business owner and have done work in the non-profit sector. I and three generations of my family live here in Marion County. As a business owner and manager and non-profit administrator I have never worked in a situation where failure to show up and do one's job wouldn't have had serious consequences. I and many of my friends and relatives in Oregon were extremely angry when legislators walked out on their duties, repeatedly, in recent sessions. A number of us discussed recall efforts and others were moved to run for office.

With multiple legislative crises facing Oregonians, from the pandemic to the wildfires, the freeze, climate change, unemployment, our kids struggling to get an education and civil unrest, it is no time for legislators to ignore their sworn moral and constitutional duties and walk out on the job.

Polling has indicated Oregonians are fed up with legislators failing to do their jobs. Last session 35 days off the job cost taxpayers almost half a million dollars and a failure to address critical challenges to our state. In my opinion, the measures proposed in the bills before you today are minimal steps, in relation to the seriousness of the breach of public trust represented by these walkouts.

Legislation disallowing the use of political contributions to pay fines for walkouts and making 10 days of unexcused work disqualify an individual from running for further public office, and SJR's to amend the constitution to address this problem are minimal steps in the right direction.

Over the years in Oregon both major parties in Oregon have used the walk-out as a way to block legislation and express their dissatisfaction with the majority party's agenda. After the walk outs in 2019, former Republican House Speaker Pro Tem Wayne Shetterly suggested, in an [July 7 Oregonian Op Ed](#), that an amendment to the Oregon constitution should be passed to create automatic penalties for this type of failure of legislators to show up for work. He noted that **“Such an amendment would ensure that the walkout does not become normalized as a legislative strategy, That's a recipe for gridlock and anarchy.”**

From the kids selling popcorn in movie theaters to multi-generational employees and volunteers in a regional food bank, none of the folks I managed or worked with would expect to have a job after multiple unexcused failures to show up for work. Let's hold legislators to the same standard!

Please support SB 261, SB 262, SJR 3 and SJR4. They are the least we can do. Thanks for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully yours,

Lee Mercer

Retired Business Owner, Silverton, Oregon

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