

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Girod, Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of SB261, SB262, and SJR3. I have submitted separate testimony in support of SJR4.

I have submitted testimony for these bills separately because if SJR4 were to pass, it would (assuming voters would pass it at the polls) negate the need for these three bills. However, if SJR4 does not pass, then these other three need to be passed. There must be penalties to lawmakers for not doing their duty.

Of course, those Oregon lawmakers who have recently and frequently walked away from their jobs have insisted that they are doing their duty for their constituents, that their constituents want them to deny the majority their vote. However, they also have thousands of constituents like me who adamantly disagree. It's ironic that, by walking out, they are doing what the **majority** of their constituents want, while ignoring what the **minority** of their constituents want, in order to deny what the **majority** of Oregonians want, so that the **minority** of Oregonians can have what they want. Just think about that for a minute.

It's also worth noting that the majority of their constituents may think they want their legislators to walk out because these legislators have told them they have no choice but to walk out to "save their rural way of life," and other such nonsense. In reality, many of the lawmakers walked out because their corporate donors (particularly the fossil fuel industry and Wall Street timber companies) wanted them to stop certain legislation. Their constituents were duped into supporting their action, unaware of the real cost these walkouts have to their rural way of life – increasing wildfires, lack of rural broadband, fewer new family-wage jobs, and failing infrastructure.

There is no precedent for what Oregon Republicans have done in the past three sessions. The anti-democratic walkout has been used six times in a little over two years, more than in the previous 162 years, since Oregon gained statehood. And it did not go unnoticed by those of us who attended the March 18th hearing that Senators Girod and Thatcher were absent without pre-excuse. Another walkout? And they accuse the Democrats of being unwilling the listen to them? More irony.

Hundreds of bills died as a result of Republicans' walkouts in 2019 and 2020, including bills to restore forest health, to fund homeless shelters, to increase transparency in government, to expand community mental health treatment, to trim tax breaks for wealthy investors, and many more.

In the 2021 session, the basic needs of Oregonians are on the line due to the coronavirus pandemic, wildfires, and the economic fallout. We can't continue to let a minority hold Oregonians hostage over their partisan demands. We either need to pass SJR4 to amend the quorum rule, or we need to severely penalize lawmakers for walking away from their jobs, just as any other worker in Oregon would be penalized. In fact, I think these bills should be amended to include stripping lawmakers of their committee appointments if they walk out. Taking away the legislative power that comes from serving on committees would also dis-incentivise these lawmakers' corporate donors from supporting and encouraging such anti-democratic behavior.

Sincerely,
Debi Ferrer
The Dalles, OR