

Chair Golden, Committee Members, and bill sponsors,

Oppose Senate Bill 335

SB 335-3 does the following:

1. Reduces the eligibility of citizens with practical forestry experience from serving on the seven member Oregon Board of Forestry. Current statute states no more than three members of the Board may receive any significant portion of their income from the forest products industry. SB 335 would reduce representation from the forest products industry to no more than two members, and require that if two members meet this requirement, at least one must represent small forest landowners (no more than 5,000 acres).
2. Eliminates the three Regional Forest Practice Committees (Northwest, Southwest and Eastern regions), which are panels of citizens that advise the Oregon Board of Forestry on current forestry issues and forest management approaches.
3. Puts the Governor in charge of hiring and firing the State Forester. Currently the Board of Forestry holds this role, whose Board members are already appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

This is regulation without sufficient representation. The Board's seven members make pivotal decision on management activities that are critical to the success of our rural businesses and the communities they support throughout Oregon. It is impossible for the Board to adequately review and vote on regulations without the benefit of on-the-ground, practical knowledge of how those regulations will impact the many foresters, loggers and landowners who work in the woods every day.

Most states and most Oregon boards and commissions require significant representation from the profession or industry regulated. California's statute requires the Board not have a majority of members have a direct personal financial interest, and also requires three members be selected from the forest products industry. Oregon Health Authority: No more than 4 of 9 members can be employed in a health care or related field. Teachers Standards of Practice Commission: all but 2 of 17 members come from the education community, including teachers, administrators, superintendents, and school board members.

This further politicizes a highly controversial and contentious Board. For the past five years or more, appointments to the Board have been highly controversial, often failing to receive Senate approval. Requiring the Governor appoint the State Forester and that he/she report to the Governor only stands to further politicize the position and the agency and is not a way of achieving long-term stability in agency administration. The current system allows executive oversight without completely politicizing the position and the agency as a whole. Several, if not most agencies, boards and commissions in Oregon function in this manner.

Having regular open dialogue with the regulated community is a part of good governance. The Regional Forest Practices Committees give the agency and Board the opportunity to receive insight from on-the-ground practicing foresters, forest engineers, landowners, and watershed managers, helping inform policymakers when new rules, guidance documents, or other forest policies are being developed.

These are merely advisory committees – nothing in statute binds or directs Board policy through these committees.