

SB 775 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**Carrier:** Sen. Frederick**Senate Committee On Rules****Action Date:** 06/13/23**Action:** Do pass with amendments. (Printed A-Eng.)**Vote:** 5-0-0-0**Yeas:** 5 - Hansell, Knopp, Lieber, Manning Jr, Steiner**Fiscal:** No fiscal impact**Revenue:** No revenue impact**Prepared By:** Leslie Porter, LPRO Analyst**Meeting Dates:** 5/23, 6/6, 6/13**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

Creates two categories of soil and water conservation district zone directors, based on county population. Specifies that all zone directors must be registered voters and reside in represented district. Zone directors in a district that does not include any county with a population of 250,000 or more must also own or manage 10 or more acres of land in represented zone and be involved in active land management, or have at least one year's experience as director or associate director of district.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- The historical context of the requirement to own or manage 10 acres of land
- The impact the current land ownership requirement has on finding candidates to serve in certain districts
- How the new population threshold would impact zones spanning more than one county
- Population density versus overall population

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

Replaces the measure.

BACKGROUND:

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) are special districts founded in response to the Dust Bowl to promote and assist voluntary natural resource conservation. The Dust Bowl was a natural disaster in the 1930s that was partially caused by certain agricultural practices that affected soils, which caused erosion and dust storms that harmed soil and water quality. The dust storms also impacted the U.S. economy and food production system. [Current statute](#) states that Oregon's 45 SWCDs are founded to:

- conserve and develop natural resources;
- control and prevent soil erosion;
- control floods;
- conserve and develop water resources and water quality;
- prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs;
- assist in maintaining the navigability of rivers and harbors;
- preserve wildlife;
- conserve natural beauty;
- promote recreational development;
- promote collaborative conservation efforts to protect and enhance healthy watershed functions;
- assist in the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency resources;
- protect the tax base;
- protect public lands; and
- protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.

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Each of Oregon's SWCDs are governed by an elected board of directors consisting of two at-large directors and three to five zone directors. The State Department of Agriculture provides for the zoning of each SWCD.

Senate Bill 775 A creates two categories of soil and water conservation district zone directors, based on county population, and removes the requirement for zone directors in districts with 250,00 or more people to own or manage 10 acres of land.