

Submitter: Sara Pascoe
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: SB775

I submit this letter of support for SB 775.

SB 775 updates the eligibility rules for soil and water conservation districts so zone candidates in counties with populations of over 250,000 do not have to own or manage at least 10 acres of land. This bill is long overdue for the following reasons:

? There are no restrictions to run for any other special districts such as school boards or fire districts. I don't believe that state law should provide advantages to certain conservation district candidates just because they own land.

? The statute that limits eligible candidates for zoned seats to those who own or manage at least 10 acres does not address the needs of conservation districts with larger populations and significant urban conservation concerns.

· Some will claim that candidates without 10 acres of land need only serve as "associate directors" of a conservation district for one year to qualify. However, state law provides no guidance on appointing associate directors. Conservation district boards make these decisions as they wish. It's not hard to imagine a board denying an individual appointment as an associate director if the board doesn't like their views or, worse, doesn't want competition from them in a future election.

? SB 775 only impacts six conservation districts in Oregon because it only applies to counties with a population of over 250,000. It is a reasonable and measured approach to increasing democratic representation in conservation districts.