Submitter: Wim de Vriend

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation

Measure: HB3382

Wim de Vriend, Coos Bay
March 12, 2023
Dear Legislators:
Your instructions advise against including information identifying me – but I had to, because what I am writing is based on a thoroughly researched book I wrote 10 years ago. Titled "The JOB Messiahs", it documented the Port of Coos Bay's 50 years of unrealistic, under-researched, money-losing, but always sensational 'development' projects. That the most recent one finally bumped into a solid barrier, consisting of Oregon's environmental regulators, should not be seen as a hindrance to our economic progress – although this bill clearly implies that. Stopping the Jordan Cove LNG export terminal has been a great benefit for the people of Coos Bay, and for other Oregonians, even if they don't know it. And, to their shame, it was neither FERC's federal 'energy experts' nor the Coast Guard's 'safety watchdogs' who stopped the Port's most dangerous scheme ever. After more than 15 years of local controversy, it was the State of Oregon's Department of State Lands that stopped the conniving Canadians; and I'm grateful to them – I mean, the Department. But this, no doubt, is why you are now gathered to consider this bill: to make the Port of Coos Bay immune to all opposition. The Port wants you to give them dictatorial powers, in a process that echoes the Enabling Acts that raised history's most infamous dictators to high office. In this case, a harbor that's always been advertised as 'natural', though in 1853 it was barely 12 feet deep, would need to be blasted down to 45 feet or deeper, with complete disregard for the people.
And this would done for the Port's latest pipe dream, a large container terminal on Coos Bay's North Spit. I presume that this was inspired by reports, a couple of years ago, of large back-ups of Asian containerships near the twin ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, a thousand miles to the south. For months, well over a hundred big ships were waiting offshore, for their turn to unload. But that situation dissipated, partly because some shippers sailed on to a container port along America's Gulf or East coast. Even with the additional cost of the Panama Canal, this had advantages because many incoming containers need to go to distribution centers east of the Rockies, and those southeastern ports offer fast, overland train connections, or inland trips by barge; even trucking is more convenient there, unhampered by a Coast Range like ours.
The brutal fact that port promoters like those in Coos Bay ignore is that America's northwestern coast is less than ideal for container traffic; for one illustration, consider the Port of Portland's long-struggling container terminal. The reasons are geography and geology. Since time immemorial it's been known that moving goods by water is the most convenient and cheapest way, compared to any land-based system; and of

those systems, railroads, though not nearly as economical, are the next cheapest, with trucking a distant third. While a train can haul hundreds of containers, most trucks only carry one. And the cost of all transportation modes is dwarfed by air freight, whose only advantage is speed.

About twenty years ago the Port of Coos Bay paid good money for two experts' studies that discouraged the notion of building a 'state of the art' shipping terminal – but the Port did what it's always done: deny the truth, and lose it in some bottom drawer. Then in 2007 the Port get terribly excited about an alleged proposal by Maersk to build a container terminal; the politicians had a big party, but nothing happened, mostly because of the Port's ignorance that big companies never approach only one location for their big plans. A good bargaining position calls for three, and the other two were better prospects.

I was hoping to send two PDF parts of my book, which highlight the events I just mentioned. If that succeeds I sincerely hope you will give them a glance. But your system may not allow it.