

February 13, 2024

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senator Kim Thatcher, Vice-Chair
Senators Sara Gelser Blouin, Dennis Linthicum and James Manning
Senate Judiciary Committee
Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

Re: Comments Concerning Proposed Amendment -4 (LC 228), SB 1576

Hello, my name is Joe Patnode. I am a rancher and business owner. I have lived in Gilliam County over 50 years, and I have been a voter for 38 years. I oppose SB 1576 -4 Amendment. This bill would give the power to two County Commissioners, allowing the removal of judicial function, and abolishment of the County Judge, without the vote of the people of Gilliam County.

In Gilliam County, we have always respected our County Judge, and have had some damn fine ones. They have been the problem solvers and the voice of reason that the Gilliam County residence could always go to when there was an issue.

As I read the bill and listen to testimony in Salem, I keep hearing about choices, but this does not leave a choice for the voters. It would be in the hands of two corrupt commissioners, shoved down our throats, whether we wanted it or not. My other concern with this bill is the first we heard about it was Friday afternoon at 4 pm, and the hearing was Monday. If it is such a good thing for the people, why were we not informed at last Wednesday's County Court meeting? In my 56 years, I have come to the realization that a quick decision is not a good decision. Shouldn't we take the time to carefully look at a decision that is going to affect us permanently?

I believe that the decision should be made by a vote of the Gilliam County people. Why are these commissioners scared of the voters? We are also in an election year, and this would give the voters no choice in choosing their County Judge.

I have spoken about some choices, but the most important choice, is that of the voters.

Respectfully,

Joe Patnode
Arlington, Oregon