

Submitter: John Payzant

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB947

I oppose SB 947. Below are reasons why.

1. Eliminates a Key Constitutional Concept

The term “militia” is explicitly recognized in both the U.S. and Oregon Constitutions. SB 947 disregards this historical and legal foundation by removing references to the “unorganized militia.”

Federal law (10 U.S.C. § 246) clearly defines the militia as including both organized (National Guard) and unorganized (able-bodied citizens). SB 947 would make Oregon statutes incompatible with that definition.

2. Undermines Civilian Preparedness

The unorganized militia includes civilians who could assist during emergencies, natural disasters, or civil defense. Removing this designation weakens the framework that encourages citizens to be prepared and responsible.

Civic readiness and responsibility are essential to a resilient community. SB 947 undermines that ethos.

3. Reduces Local Control and Public Trust

Replacing the broader term “militia” with just “National Guard” places all authority in the hands of a government-controlled force, limiting local and voluntary participation in defense-related activities.

Citizens may view this as an attempt to centralize power and control, eroding trust in state leadership.

4. Potential Step Toward Disarming the Public

Removing the concept of the unorganized militia could pave the way for more restrictive interpretations of the Second Amendment, limiting the right of citizens to bear arms outside of official state-sanctioned forces.

This bill may be used in the future to justify policies that only recognize firearm possession within government-approved structures.

5. No Clear Public Benefit

SB 947 offers no measurable improvement in safety, governance, or readiness. Instead, it creates confusion and distances the law from long-standing constitutional definitions.

If this bill passes, it sets a precedent for removing other constitutional language with little justification.

Thank you

John Payzant