

Submitter: Richard Olson
On Behalf Of: Tourism Small Business
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB916
To: Oregon State Legislature
Subject: Opposition to Senate Bill 916

Dear Members of the Oregon State Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 916, which seeks to extend unemployment benefits to workers engaged in labor disputes, including strikes and lockouts. While I respect the rights of workers to advocate for better conditions, this bill misaligns the original intent of unemployment insurance (UI) and threatens the financial stability of Oregon's businesses and UI trust fund.

Undermining the Purpose of Unemployment Insurance

Unemployment benefits exist to support workers who lose their jobs through no fault of their own, such as during layoffs or company closures. A strike is an active choice by employees or a strategic decision by unions, not an involuntary job loss.

Expanding UI to cover striking workers conflates unemployment assistance with labor activism, setting a dangerous precedent that could lead to further expansions beyond the program's intended scope.

Straining Businesses and Oregon's UI Trust Fund

The UI system is funded by employer payroll taxes, meaning that businesses—not the unions calling for strikes—will ultimately bear the financial burden of this proposal. The Oregon UI trust fund should remain dedicated to helping workers who have no control over their job loss. Redirecting these funds to striking workers risks depleting resources meant for those in genuine need, potentially necessitating tax hikes on employers and discouraging investment in Oregon.

I urge you to reject SB 916 and uphold the integrity of the UI system. Oregon should focus on policies that foster job growth and economic stability rather than creating financial incentives for prolonged labor disputes.

Sincerely,
Richard W. Olson, Jr., President
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Florence, OR