



February 27, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
Senate Committee on Labor and Business

Shane M. Alderson
Commission Chair
salderson@bakercountyor.gov

RE: Opposition to Oregon Senate Bill 916 (2025)

Dear Chair Taylor, Vice-chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Business:

Christina Witham
Commissioner
cwitham@bakercountyor.gov

On behalf of Baker County Board of Commissioners, we would like to go on record opposing SB916 due to the fiscal impact the bill could impose upon our County.

Michelle Kaseberg
Commissioner
mkaseberg@bakercountyor.gov

The term "labor dispute" could be defined as a broad term and could encompass a wide range of activities and processes – not just a traditional and lawful strike by workers. The County does value its union members and respects their rights to engage in labor actions. The passage of this bill has the potential of shifting an unbudgeted fiscal burden to the County that could negatively impact all our employees, including those in a bargaining unit.

As you probably already know, the counties are reimbursement (self-insured) employers, where the County reimburses the state unemployment fund, dollar-for-dollar for each unemployment benefit paid out to former employees. The financial implication of this, even for our smaller county, could be substantial in diverting resources from critical services such as public safety/emergency management and infrastructure maintenance, to name just a couple. Expanding benefits to striking workers will increase costs for employers, strain our already tight budgets and make Oregon less attractive for business investment, which is critical for job creation and economic growth - which are two of Governor Kotek's priorities.

Oregon's unemployment system is designed to support workers that have lost their jobs involuntarily, not those who choose to "walk off the job," nor to subsidize labor disputes. This bill has the potential where quickly resolving labor disputes would not be the priority and would lead to service disruptions affecting some of our most vulnerable residents (i.e., health care, public safety, transportation, etc.

Baker County respectfully urges the committee to oppose this bill as it is currently written. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Kaseberg
Baker County Commissioner