



Greg Johnston, Unsplash

"Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect." - Chief Seattle, Suqwamish and Duwamish

February 2nd, 2026

House Committee on Revenue

RE: HB 4134 , "Increases the state transient lodging tax"

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, Members of the Committee:

With Respect and Gratitude I address you as all my relations, connected in so many ways of the Great Mystery of the Universe.

"All my relations," and I truly mean that, is the basis for what I have to say here.

How does one relate to, respond in a caring way, in a compassionate way . . . to all beings? How do I respond authentically and with integrity . . . given my heartfelt relationship with wildlife, the wonderful beings I share Earth with?

First, I listen. I see the situation for what it is, right here, right now. I hear everyone who speaks . . . in their own way. Those who support and those who oppose. And those who can not speak for themselves, the wildlife, who are the focus of the bill before us.

"On the other side of fear is peace." Native American proverb

What I hear, is a lot of fear. Those opposed, fear the loss of income. Those in support, the loss of species. The wildlife, while apparently unaware of their situation, are threatened with extinction. If they were aware of that, I have to believe, they too, would be afraid.

So, the question becomes, how do we get beyond the fear, respond in a caring way . . . to everyone? Beyond hearing what everyone has said or would or will say, it's by asking for everyone's own ideas, to let them offer their solutions.

"What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from great loneliness of spirit, for what happens to the beasts also happens to man. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth." - Chief Seattle, Suqwamish and Duwamish

The wildlife need to be saved. Those in support of the bill need funding to save them, for wildlife conservation. And their apparent solution, is the bill itself.

For those opposed to the bill . . . respectfully, since I myself, as one who supports wildlife, and there being threatened species, I see funding their conservation as an immediate need, as a true emergency situation.

I can not offer a solution for those in opposition. It simply would not be fair or appropriate for me to do so. Let me, though, offer some key questions in this regard, again, respectfully, and with sincere intent, that may help guide them to find their answers, perhaps reconsider their position.

First, are you aware of the past and present funding issues for ODFW for non-extractive and non-consumptive wildlife conservation? (Hunting and fishing being extractive and consumptive, just to clarify.) And, that past and apparently existing funding challenges, both for ODFW and relative to how the legislature is either willing or unwilling to fund state budgets, is why such a bill is being brought forward by wildlife advocates?

Next, would a minimal 1% plus increase in the Transient Lodging Tax really have the kind of financial impacts you are suggesting? And as such, are they unfounded fears?

"Ask questions from the heart, and you will be answered from the heart." - Omaha Tribe

And, if so, can you then step back and simply live with a relatively minor increase in the tax, and as such, no longer oppose it? Indeed, given the important funds generated to support conservation, especially if, in your heart and gut you know and feel the value of wildlife -- and realize their inherent value -- could you then embrace this bill?

Finally, to respond to those who say the tax should only be used for tourism, my question is simply, why? It's to be acknowledged that the state lodging tax was originally intended to generate funds for Oregon Tourism Commission programs, that's a given. But, this bill would not take away any funding from Travel Oregon, it simply, and apparently for administrative purposes to collect the revenue, asks it be increased only a bit more than 1%. That said, cities and towns, and counties, have their own local tax lodging taxes, too, and use the revenues collected to fund a myriad of projects. So how is this lodging tax to be used for ODFW conservation programs, in essence, really any different?

Again, respectfully, to those opposed, these are the key questions that I ask you to ponder, within your own hearts and minds, and also for a reconsideration of your position.

In closing, I believe that when we open our hearts and minds -- and listen deeply within ourselves and to others -- we see the situation for what it truly is, and can respond with compassion and kind actions, with care, for all beings, human and wildlife, Earth and the Universe itself.

So be it.

Humbly, and in Kinship with All Beings . . .

Al LePage ☺

Albert LePage, Eugene, Oregon

