

February 02, 2026

Chair Taylor, Vice-chair Hayden and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Zachary Weitzel and I am a Force Protection Officer at the Oregon Military Department. I have worked for the Oregon Military Department for 2 years and prior to that was employed with the Klamath Falls Police Department as a Patrol Officer/Sergeant for approximately 9 years.

In my current position as a Force Protection Officer I am assigned to a "Flight" of personnel working side by side with Air Force Security Forces members to provide security and law enforcement duties for the 173d Fighter Wing on Kingsley Field. While I am employed for the State of Oregon Military Department, we have an agreement with Air Force/Oregon Air National Guard that is referred to as "Appendix 23" that vests us with the same lawful authority as Air Force Security Forces (Military Police). The squadron that we are assigned to is the 173d Security Forces Squadron, which has concurrent jurisdiction on Kingsley Field. Concurrent jurisdiction refers to the fact that our jurisdiction is shared with the Klamath Falls Police Department and the Klamath County Sheriff's Office (dependent upon where an incident occurs on base). As a part of this concurrent jurisdiction our unit is authorized to enforce the Oregon Code of Military Justice, Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Oregon Revised Statutes. We are authorized to detain based on the aforementioned laws and conduct investigations jointly with partner agencies. As a part of our duties we are expected to respond to and assist in the safe resolution of all emergency situations that arise on Kingsley Field. Force Protection Officers are armed with rifles, pistols and less lethal means such as tasers or batons. We are required to be knowledgeable and proficient on applicable use of force policies, weapons proficiency, defensive tactics, high risk and low risk traffic stops and applicable case law. We are required to wear ballistic vests and engage in shift work to provide 24 coverage/protection to Kingsley Field. Our duties closely mirror a municipal police department or sheriff's office.

I am here today in support of SB 1569, which aligns Force Protection Officer into PER's Police and Fire. Like many classifications in this bill, our counterparts employed by other employers across the state already receive this enhanced retirement benefit.

This is a benefits equity issue that directly affects recruitment and retention. Force Protection Officers carry firearms, enforce regulations and laws, engage in 24 hour rotating shift work, work holidays, wear ballistic vests and are not compensated at the same wage rate or retirement rate as our comparators. Generally speaking younger Force Protection Officers will move on to Police Departments or Sheriff's Offices to receive a better retirement and wage for comparable duties. Shift work syndrome is a major health concern within first response workers. The early retirement provided by the Police/Fire reclassification would not only fix a benefit equity issue, it would lead to a healthier and more viable retirement for Force Protection Officers.

I urge this committee to vote yes on SB 1569.

Respectfully,

Zachary Weitzel
Klamath Falls, 97603