

Submitter: Sharon Konopa
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4148

Please Vote No on HB4148a—cities can already impose public safety and transportation fees on utility bills to back fill their program costs.

I am so dismayed about the House Revenue Committee's and full House decision by passing this bill. At least 75% submitted testimony in opposition and the only supporters were cities and counties. Then half an hour before the work session several amendments were proposed and the only one discussed was -7. Folks please, please read this amendment. The amendment is worse than the bill introduced. How can a committee ignore so much opposition and then shove a -7 in their face that wipes out the tourism promotion component? No wonder the voters feel the elected officials have their minds made up before a hearing. This bill is a prime example.

I watched the House Floor meeting and arguments in favor. It clearly shows the information provided by Rep. Javardi was from the coastal communities. Why change all of Oregon? The Willamette Valley's tourism promotion efforts are at a higher level than the coast. There are high deserts and mountains throughout the whole western states for Oregon to compete with. Every part of our state has different attractions to see, but how will someone from the coast know about the east and vice versa. How will Arizona know about all of the places to visit in Oregon? Marketing isn't cheap anymore. It also costs communities dollars to put on festivals and events.

Rep. Reschke was right on with his arguments against the bill on the House floor. He clearly sees the great importance of tourism and the dire need for it mostly with the economic times we are entering. I am very disappointed in our house members who voted for this bill.

My arguments against this bill:

The amendment states "or". There is no guarantee one dime will be spent on tourism as written in this bill. A city can pay a staff member to oversee a grant program. How cushy of a job when we Oregonians will be sitting at home without any community events to attend because you wiped out the guaranteed tourism component.

This amendment increases city or county funding to spend on non-tourism activities and even lowers tourism's portion from 70% to 50%. But now the 50% can be spent on grants for failing businesses.

- Please don't expect every city will be supporting their tourism programs by thinking they have their budgets and a public process to follow if a community wants more spent-on tourism and events. That ship sailed with larger cities. I heard that argument over and over from house members. That clearly is a sales pitch coming from the

League of Oregon Cities. I have been through 30 years of Albany's city budgets. There was more public say over the budgets years back. But now staff will propose a budget and whenever any budget member wants to make changes, I have heard them state over and over. "A lot of work was put into this budget and if you want changes you will have to reduce the funds in another program. Or increase the city service fee." The public input process is not the same as years back, folks. Once a budget is proposed to the budget committee it basically set in stone.

- Have you noticed many cities are now imposing city service fees on utility bills to backfill their general fund programs, like police, fire, parks and libraries. Cities have that avenue now and seem to use it as an open check book. So now they want to dip into the TLT pot of funds. What's next after they spend these dollars on a few desk jobs?

- This bill is turning the transient lodging tax into basically a sales tax by allowing cities and counties to not fund tourism. Would you do the same shift for gas taxes by not spending it on roads? TLT is for tourism. Where is the guarantee in this bill for tourism promotion?

Please read my whole letter I emailed you, since this online version limits words.

Please Vote No on HB4148a,

Sharon Konopa, Former Mayor of Albany