

MALHEUR ENTERPRISE

The Voice of Malheur County

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PO Box 310 Vale OR 97918

House Committee on Rules

SENATE BILL 1506

SUBMITTED TESTIMONY

Les Zaitz, publisher, Malheur Enterprise

Dear representatives,

The shaky handwriting was clearly the work of an elderly woman, writing from her home in Ontario, Oregon. She had mailed a check for \$5 to the Malheur Enterprise to help cover escalating fees being imposed for records by Malheur County officials.

“Thank you for keeping us informed,” she wrote.

She had a lot of company in sending money to the Enterprise. Citizens of Malheur County made clear with their notes and their contributions to the newspaper’s “Dollars for Disclosure” campaign that they highly valued government transparency and access to public records. In Oregon’s poorest county, citizens gave more than \$4,000 in one month to ensure their local newspaper could afford the price of government records.

I share this by way of providing my unqualified support for Senate Bill 1506.

The Oregon Public Records Advisory Council in its short life has established itself in the minds of Oregonians as a safeguard for that government transparency. And during the political conflagration over the treatment of Oregon’s first public records advocate, Oregonians appeared to speak in concert about their interest in seeing that the council and the advocate operate free of political interference.

This is a “good government” piece of legislation building on the wisdom of the 2017 Legislature to create the council in the first place.

I urge you to adopt SB 1506 and reject any effort to cloud the Public Record Advisory Council’s needed independence to serve the public interest.

CONTACT:

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