

Thank you Chair Wagner. Thank you Vice-Chair Girod. Thank you Senators Manning, Burdick and Thatcher. My name is Aubrey Russell. I speak on behalf of myself today.

I want to first discuss with you a letter that I submitted to accompany my testimony. I was provided with a copy of this letter to the governor, but did not have any role in its production. I spoke with Samantha Koopman, and she informs me that you would have seen this letter. You will want to read this letter before you vote on the confirmation of Dr. Thompson as a member of the Columbia River Gorge Commission. The letter is signed by, among others, former Governor Barbara Roberts, also a former Gorge Commissioner. It is signed by Kristina Olsen, former US Attorney for the district of Oregon, and likewise a former Gorge Commissioner. It is signed by Anne Squire, a former Governor's natural resources officer, and also a former Gorge Commissioner. It is signed by a former US Congressman and a former Multnomah County Commission Chair, both former Gorge Commissioners. It is signed by an additional 10 former Gorge Commissioners, also with impressive credentials. The letter was organized and circulated by former Gorge Commissioners.

The former commissioners write the governor, as they say, on "a matter of urgency."

They state, that because of the challenges (they use the word "resistance") already facing the Gorge Commission, "it is essential that your appointee has a long-term record of supporting conservation issues in the Columbia Gorge or statewide."

The letter then describes the qualifications of two candidates for this appointment. Candidates other than Dr. Thompson. The qualifications include years and decades of experience that relates to the communities, the law, the policy, and the issues, that are relevant to the Gorge Commission's work.

The letter does not mention Dr. Thompson or her resume, but as the appointee of whom they are all well aware, we know that they are contrasting the impressive experience of two other candidates with the candidacy of Dr. Thompson.

The letter concludes: "Having an extensive track record of conservation in the state will allow your appointee to successfully address issues that we all care about. . ."

Why is this appointment so important? Why would fifteen such impressive leaders sign on to this letter which addresses the appointment and confirmation of Dr. Thompson? Well, it involves Lake Tahoe.

Chair Wagner, I know that you are aware of Tryon Creek State Park, and so of the activist Lu Beck. You may not know that her husband had expert knowledge of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act. Borden Beck, along with Gail Achterman drafted that Act. They drafted the Act with you Senators in mind. Because of Lake Tahoe. Lake Tahoe had been "protected" by a similar act creating a board, or commission, and had failed because the local interest in economics and development was not successfully balanced by state appointments that could represent the national, regional, and state interest in the conservation mission the act set out to accomplish. Mr. Beck and Ms. Achterman therefore gave you – the State of Oregon – the responsibility of appointing the best possible commissioners –three of them -- to ensure knowledge, experience and leadership to offset the local

push for –because we are human – economics and development in the interest of the largest land owners, and largest employers, and local politicians.

But let me ask again: why is this important? The Gorge is protected by a federal law, after all. No. The federal act guided the creation of the Gorge Commission, and the Gorge Commission created a Management Plan under Oregon's then-appointees Stafford Hansel, Don Clark, and Barbara Bailey. Luminaries. Highly, highly experienced in issues relating to the Gorge.

The Gorge is not protected by the federal act any longer because that original management plan is in the hands of current commissioners to amend as they will. Making decisions as in the case of Lake Tahoe.

But once again: is this important, and why not leave it to chance? What of real significance could really happen to the management plan? You might think I would be a fear monger to suggest that it could be amended to allow a destination resort on protected lands within the scenic area. A destination resort larger than many cities within the Gorge, promoted by the Gorge's largest land owner, largest employers, and local politicians. But no, I would not be a fear monger: with Oregon's appointments to the commission uncertain in their knowledge and weak in their leadership, that happened a few years ago. Not possible under Oregon law, but in the national scenic area, deemed exceptionally appropriate for this sort of abuse.

Or, maybe I would be a fear monger to suggest that one half of the land within the Gorge could be rezoned for commercial uses by a Gorge Commission lacking in strong leadership and expertise on issues of land use law, policy, and history? But that was done too, by allowing commercial uses in historic structures (1950s and earlier) throughout the Gorge, including restaurants, accommodations, urban-scale uses, etc. etc. Throughout the rural National Scenic Area (astonishingly) this sort of zoning is permitted because of a Gorge Commission lacking in the qualities of leadership and expertise that **you** are charged with providing.

There are countless small examples. The 1000 cuts, if you like. But I will not go on.

But I will say that it is time for Oregon to fulfill its intended role. Do not vote to confirm Dr. Thompson. Join the leaders who write to insist on a track record worthy of this difficult and important job, and send this message to the Governor: it is time for Oregon to honor the Borden Becks, Gail Achtermans, Stafford Hansels, Don Clarks, Barbara Baileys, and the countless others who did and do devote years, careers and even lifetimes to accomplishing expertise and experience in this important business of the state.

Thank you.