

Testimony of Bert Krages in Support of HB 2386

I am writing in support of HB 2386. I believe that the State of Oregon would be well served by the availability of panels to independently review scientific issues at the request of state agencies, local governments, and private persons. Such panels would be particularly helpful with respect to issues that involve multiple scientific disciplines and affect resources that fall under the auspices of multiple agencies.

As things currently stand, some agencies by virtue of their mission lack the depth of scientific and technical expertise needed to adequately consider all the ramifications associated with the options before them. Although agencies are required to receive public comment in the course of rulemaking and may assemble rulemaking advisory committees when they deem them useful, these processes are often adversarial, rarely objective, and many times fail to provide information that agencies find genuinely useful.

A case in point is the longstanding issue of the effect of wake boats on the Willamette River. The Oregon State Marine Board became actively involved in wake boat issues around 2005 and has been constantly engaged with the issue since then. The science underlying the wake boat controversy encompasses several scientific and technical disciplines, including aquatic biology, civil engineering, marine engineering, environmental engineering, fisheries management, and recreation management. Furthermore, although the Marine Board is a small agency with a focused mission, it has borne the brunt of the workload despite the fact that wake boat issues affect matters that fall under the auspices of government entities such as the Department of State Lands, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Fish and Wildlife, the City of Lake Oswego, the City of Milwaukie, and the sheriff's offices of four Oregon counties. No one disputes that the Marine Board has done an admirable job of administering the public comment process and assembling a rulemaking advisory committee, but neither process has provided the Board with the benefit of an opinion rendered by a neutral body of qualified experts who lack a direct interest in the outcome.

I further believe that the panels will be independent and unbiased. It has been my experience that the kinds of people who meet the qualifications listed in the bill are generally motivated by the desire to understand and apply science in an objective manner, as opposed to being driven by political agendas. In any case, the Independent Science Review Board would serve solely in an informational capacity and would not have any authority to bind agencies to particular courses of action.

Oregon is facing a multitude of daunting issues involving natural resources, such as wildfires, water resources, and the restoration of salmon populations. Instituting an independent scientific review process that is transparent and objective will help government agencies throughout the state. Therefore, I encourage the Committee to vote in favor of HB 2386.

s/ Bert P. Krages II