



## Lake County Board of Commissioners

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Barry Shullanberger, Commissioner  
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House Committee On Rules

### **RE: SB-493A**

I appreciate the time to testify today in opposition to SB 493. For the record, my name is James Williams, I am the Chair and County Commissioner in Lake County Oregon.

Lake County spans an area of over 8,000 square miles, with less than 8,000 people. Truly a Frontier County.

We have endured many struggles in the past years, from devastating wildfires, droughts, a global pandemic, loss of jobs from losing 4 sawmills, and now potentially, the closure of our state prison. Good jobs are important to us, jobs that provide a decent living wage for family households, and enable families and private individuals to make investments in real-estate and build new homes. I'm sure I don't need to take up any of your time with comments regarding Oregon's dire need for affordable housing.

SB 493A would change the determination of prevailing wage, by replacing our current structure with the highest collectively bargained wage in the locality. Counties like mine in rural Oregon are very concerned about substantial inflation of the prevailing wage rate. These increases will cause public projects to cost substantially more. This means fewer school projects (we have schools in dire need of repair), courthouse renovations, applicable affordable housing projects, road, rail and bridge projects, to name just a few.

Local wages go hand in hand with cost of living, and in a rural area, our cost of living is typically much lower than in urban/metro areas of the state.

If we are going to have a conversation about what is fair, then maybe we should consider why rural frontier Counties will be being forced to subsidize the wages and income for those with a higher cost of living from other parts of Oregon? Or inflate costs to public projects well beyond reasonable rates that reflect local efficiencies.

Lake County is not opposed to prevailing wage... Prevailing wage simply needs to be calculated to reflect local wages.

Even if the prevailing wage was based upon an average rather than the highest calculated rate, it would be more ideal. This would help prevent one outlier CBA from creating a spike in the wages.

I think it also appropriate that BOLI study the outcome of whatever changes are made, so that we may determine the negative effects on the prevailing wage system.

Although I understand the premise of SB 493, rather than painting with a broad brush over our state. I would ask for a broader perspective of mutual respect and understanding for our rural neighbors.

I respectfully ask and hope that SB 493 will not be passed out of committee. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Commissioner/Chair James Williams