

Dear Sen. Chuck
Riley, Vice-Chair Bill
Hansell and members
of the Committee on
Labor and Business,

Thank you for the
opportunity to testify
publicly and in writing

on Senate Bill 500
w/-2 amendment. I sit
on the Public
Records Advisory
Council representing
members of the
public who don't work
for the news media or
any government
agency. I come with
experience as a

recovering journalist,
multimedia storyteller,
and self-proclaimed
student of modern-
day ethics in today's
fight against
misinformation and
disinformation.

2021 should be
focused on recovery

and consensus. I'm really hoping this is a true statement to all who hear it working in cities, counties, state and federal agencies, as well as our businesses, families, and voters. And it's tough when seeing on the news an

emphasis on the
COVID monstrosity,
the divineness of
political scandal and
threats to democracy,
and the few leaders
on both sides doing
their best to promote
their vision for
recovery and
consensus in 2021.

My point:
Divisiveness. Yuck.
You have the
opportunity to
celebrate the
opposite if you adopt
and approve Senate
Bill 500 for a full vote.
Senate Bill 500 is not
just bipartisan, not

just bicameral, but the historical foes in our democracy in the colosseum-like arena of public records battles, these foes have collaborated to create this legislation, Senate Bill 500.

What's it do? It

solidifies the
independence of the
Public Records
Advocate & Public
Records Advisory
Council (PRAC). Why
is that important? Let
the words of the 2nd
President, John
Adams, convince
you. I've shortened

the quote, but he wrote, “Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, ... of the characters and conduct of their rulers.”

The technical details,
the legalese that

justifies Senate Bill 500, I'm sure, is well covered in other testimonies by my peers. I mentioned earlier "historical foes." Well, the Advisory Council is comprised of news leaders & public servants from state

agencies, counties,
cities, special districts
& the public
workforce to help
Sen. Kim Thatcher &
Rep. Karin Power
sponsor Senate Bill
500 with confidence.
Journalists and
government often find
themselves in legal

disputes over access to public records and public meetings.

If you notice, the members of this council represent a small segment of the overall members of Oregon's society and communities.

Somehow, I'm supposed to represent everyone else. And I come at the responsibility blessed with my experience as a nationwide journalist and now in climate and social justice nonprofits as a

storyteller and media specialist.

But in my role: Think about the personnel file & complaints against "bad apples" at law enforcement agencies, or the emails of public leaders crafting public

policy to hide
corruption,
tomfoolery, and
scandal from our
eyes and ears. I'm
fully aware the same
laws protect your
home address and
private. information or
everyone's medical &
mental health

records, private negotiations of things like property sales, HR stuff. It's tricky. I get it.

Thomas Jefferson said, "information is the currency of democracy." In other words, when

"information" kept by the government has no value or trust from its citizenry, then facts are useless.

Today, trust in the news press and trust in government could be much better. The Public Records Advocate, a truly

independent
advocate, will be a
neutral force to settle
disputes between the
government and its
people over records.
It will return the value
of trust in our
democracy. Help us
celebrate the
collaboration and

spirit of its nature.

Thanks for your time.

Tony Hernandez
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