

Submitter: Pat Shaw
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1576

Chair Prozanski,
Vice Chair Thatcher,
Members of the committee

I am writing in opposition to SB 1576 -4. I have been a resident of Gilliam County for more than 70 years. I served in our county government for 26 years, 20 years as an elected official. During my years as County Judge, I presided over both juvenile and probate cases. Throughout my years in this county, I have never seen such an uproar over the positions taken by our county court.

The -4 amendment to SB 1576 is the consequence of the governing body of Gilliam County taking an action that was considered illegal, according to Oregon Revised Statutes, and which resulted in threatened legal action. The Gilliam County Court has rapidly pushed forward with restructuring the county government against the vocal outcry of its citizenry.

There have been public requests for open evening hearings and a public election on the matter, but all this has been ignored. Instead, this -4-amendment appeared on the legislative docket without any discussion or approval in a public meeting of the Gilliam County Court. One wonders who in Gilliam County's government approved requesting a legislative change.

My opposition is based on the concept that no 2 or 3 persons should have the authority to change the structure of a county government without a public vote of the citizens of said county. Also, currently there are no restrictions from allowing a county to turn jurisdiction of a probate case over to Circuit Court. I also oppose the "hurry-up before election" approach that has been taken. There is nothing in this amendment that should require an emergency clause.

I would request that you protect our right to vote. Two or three people do not constitute "we the people" when it comes to our voting right. There is no foreseen rush to amend the statute. Please give the people of Gilliam County the opportunity to voice our opinion at the ballot box.