

Submitter: Bonnie Johnson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1576

February 13, 2024

Senator Floyd Prozanski, Chair Senator Kim Thatcher, Vice-Chair,
Senators Sara Gelser Blouin, Dennis Linthicum and James Manning
Senate Judiciary Committee
Oregon State Legislature
State Capitol Salem, Oregon

Re: Comments Concerning Proposed Amendment -4 (LC 228), SB 1576

I am writing in regard to, SB 1576-4, a proposal to transfer probate jurisdictions from the county judge to circuit court. Gilliam County is a county included in the proposal. An emergency proposal; why is it an emergency? I have lived in Gilliam County for 50 years. My husband is a 4th generation resident. The county court, a judge and commissioners, system has been in place since 1885. Until very recently, I have never heard a complaint about the system. Of course, as expected, there have been complaints about the people holding the positions identified in the system but not the system itself. The current judge and commissioners seem determined to change the system to a Board of Commissioners. I understand Gilliam County is changing and with that change comes new requirements, laws, financial matters, and responsibilities. The court system may need to be updated, BUT NOT, without the citizens being allowed to vote on the issue. This is an election year. We have three candidates running for the judge position. Why would the current court even consider removing the judge position before this election and without a vote of the citizens?

I, unfortunately, have grown to have trust issues with the current court. I cannot understand why they are trying to restructure a court system in place since 1885 without the vote of the people. Passing SB 1576-4 would remove a very important step in Gilliam County residents and candidates rights. Passing it would allow the current court to restructure the system without citizens vote and, by all indications, that is what they are determined to do.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Johnson

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