



Office of the Senate President

Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the Senate Rules Committee,

For the record, my name is Rob Wagner, State Senator for Senate District 19 and I serve as President of the Oregon Senate. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1524 — the Unsung Legislative Heroes Recognition Program.

This idea began with a constituent of mine, Steve Burrows who reached out to my office last summer with an idea for a statewide citizen recognition program. He and others felt passionately about the importance of recognizing our neighbors who have spent their lives supporting and uplifting our state -- and I agreed with him. With this inspiration, I began looking around the state, and, in fact, right in my backyard was a great program to model our proposal after -- the City of Lake Oswego's Unsung Heroes Award program.

This bill, SB 1524, would establish the Unsung Legislative Heroes Recognition Program, providing all legislators the opportunity to honor individuals who selflessly contribute to positive change in our communities.

Each caucus office in the Senate and House would be able to nominate up to three Oregonians annually from their members' districts. The Senate President and House Speaker would then approve these 12 nominees, officially recognizing them as Unsung Heroes. The Unsung Legislative Heroes Recognition Program aims to establish an annual process that acknowledges outstanding community members for their efforts, ensuring their positive impact is recognized and appreciated by all Oregonians.

Now, just to be clear that this recognition is intended for everyday Oregonians, there are some requirements for who can and cannot be awarded. This recognition cannot go to an elected or appointed official in any level of government, cannot go to a lobbyist, or anyone employed by a political party or political committee. This bill is to celebrate the unsung heroes of our districts, so people who are already widely recognized or doing their work as part of their job also would not qualify.

The Lake Oswego Unsung Heroes Program has celebrated many of the unsung voices in my own Senate District. Award recipients have included volunteers with the Festival of the Arts, Lake Oswego Library, Lake Oswego Parks and Recreation events, the Chinese Youth and Women in Development Organization, the Oswego Heritage House, and many more. My



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mother, Stephanie Wagner received this award herself in 2015 for her 30 years of volunteer work through the Friends of Tryon Creek behind the scenes.

Instituting a recognition program at the state legislative level would benefit our communities throughout Oregon, much like what we have seen in Lake Oswego over the past 20 years. We won't only celebrate our unsung heroes but inspire others in our community to do the same.

Thank you to Representative Daniel Nguyen, Mayor Joe Buck, and my constituent Steve Burrows for testifying in support of SB 1524.

In a time of division in our country, let's celebrate Oregon by celebrating Oregonians. Thank you for taking the time to consider SB 1524.

Senator Rob Wagner