

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee -

My name is Will Lathrop. In 2024, I ran to be Oregon's Attorney General. I am the son of a 5th generation rancher and grew up in a community supported primarily by agriculture. In my two-year campaign, I canvassed our entire State, and held community engagements in all 36 counties – many of them multiple times.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to watch testimony on SB 747. In her testimony, Representative Boshart-Davis mentioned a growing fear amongst farmers that if they spoke up against state regulations, they could or would be retaliated against by regulatory agencies. Senator Golden seemed skeptical about Rep. Boshart Davis' assertion, but also concerned that if it were true, it was a serious matter.

When I began my run for AG, I was primarily focused on Oregon's inability to protect people from crime – my background is in law enforcement and that was my paramount platform. However, throughout the course of the campaign, I heard persistent complaints from farmers, ranchers, natural resource based industries, and manufacturers about illegal state agency overreach and retaliatory practices. Like Senator Golden, I was skeptical at first, but after months of detailed accounts, I became quite concerned that some of our state agencies – or sections within those agencies – are overstepping their authority and on occasion, acting vindictively. So much so, that taking on agency overreach became a pillar of my campaign.

In the abstract, it is not hard to believe that people, given power over others, might expand or abuse that power – that is the sum of human history. Bureaucratic abuses are particularly troubling in a democracy because bureaucrats are unelected officials and largely shielded from popular vote by employment law and public unions.

It goes without saying that agency overreach or abuse of authority is not a partisan issue. In fact, the party in power owes a sacred duty to Oregonians to make sure that the agencies within its control do not overreach or retaliate against businesses or citizens. I believe the members of this committee to be public servants who understand the chill that agency retaliation or the widespread perception of agency retaliation can have on small businesses and family-owned farms who do not have the means to afford to litigate illegal agency behavior.

I hope that the Committee will pause and give more attention to this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "W Lathrop". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "W" and a long, sweeping underline.

Will Lathrop