

Chip Shields

Former State Senator - District 22 - N/NE Portland

Served 2009 - 2017

Good afternoon Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham and members of the committee.

I wish I could be there today to give this testimony in person. My name is Chip Shields and I'm submitting this written testimony in support of your "aye" vote on SCR 10 honoring the life and memory of my former colleague Senate President Peter Courtney.

I served under Peter's leadership when I was appointed to the Senate in 2009 until my retirement in 2017. In that time, I came to see the dedication he had to his staff, the dedication and reverence he had for the members of the senate regardless of party, his dedication to our great state, and most importantly, his dedication to his family: Margie, Peter, Sean and Adam.

Peter and I liked to banter about the SMU Mustang Football program, a team that was also known by their nickname the “Ponies.”

We also both loved Al Pacino’s “Game of Inches” speech from the movie On Any Given Sunday. In that speech Pacino motivated his team to give their all, and fight for every inch on the grid iron, because when one adds up all those inches in the game, those inches can be the difference between winning and losing... between living and dying.

I learned from Peter that the legislature, like football, was often a game of inches. And as a body when we moved the ball downfield inch-by-inch, Peter knew we were improving the lives of everyday Oregonians sometimes exponentially...day by day...inch by inch.

Here’s one of many examples that have stuck with me. I had worked hard on a bill one session that had passed the House, but didn’t have the votes in Senate. I was visibly upset about this bill’s demise and one morning on the Senate floor, Senator Alan Bates, rest his soul, saw that I was upset and he walked over on the Senate floor to me and said, “I know you’re upset about your bill, but you really care about improving foster care, right?”

“Sure, I said.”

Senator Bates continued, “What if the Senate President could figure out a way to give some money for improving foster care this session? Would that take away some of the sting?”

“Absolutely,” I said. Senator Bates then talked to Peter and Peter made it happen. Peter delivered a quarter million dollar for foster kids.

That was an important inch in this legislative game of inches. Thanks to Peter’s kind spirit in looking out for me as a colleague and in securing that funding for foster kids, I am pleased to report that it sparked the creation of the Foster Homes of Healing coalition that has dramatically moved the ball well down the field in yards, not inches, to elevate the quality of fostering in Oregon.

This is the type of kindness and concern that Peter lead with everyday.

There are many other examples I could site about Peter’s thoughtfulness and his deep desire to make Oregon better every day... day in and day out, inch by inch.

In closing, I just want to thank you Peter for all you did for Oregon.
And I would like to give my deepest condolences to Margie, Peter, Sean
and Adam.

I urge your “aye” vote on SCR 10.

Thank you Chair Jama and members of the committee.