

April 18, 2025

Position on Bills at 2025 Session of Oregon Legislature:

HB 3499: Oppose



The Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN) is a coalition of over 50 local Indivisible groups throughout Oregon that cooperate and amplify their joint efforts to advance important federal and state legislation and engage with elected officials to promote causes for the benefit of all Oregonians.

COIN opposes HB 3499, which would require the approval of an urban renewal plan by the electors of a municipality proposing a plan or a substantial amendment to a plan. Reasons not to advance this bill are ably stated in the testimony of Central Oregon Landwatch, 1000 Friends of Oregon, the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners, the City of Bend, the Metro Mayors' Consortium of the League of Oregon Cities, the Oregon Economic Development Association, the the City of Sherwood.

COIN is reluctant to oppose a bill that adds a voter approval condition to major actions by governments. We favor voter input. The adoption of urban renewal area (URA) plans and substantial amendments thereto are already expressly subject to voter referendum under ORS 457.120(3)(d).

HB 3499 would also add the voter approval requirement to any substantial amendment to an existing urban renewal area (URA) plan. The bill states that it applies "to urban renewal plans proposed or substantially amended on or after the effective date of this 2025 Act." HB 3499 then alters the current definition of what would qualify as a "substantial amendment." Existing law (457.085(2)(i)) defines it as including at least:

(A) Adding land to the urban renewal area if the addition results in a cumulative addition of more than one percent of the urban renewal area.

(B) Increasing the maximum amount of indebtedness that can be issued or incurred under the plan.

HB 3499 then removes the 1% threshold from ORS 457.085(2)(i)(A), so that any addition of land to the URA, however small, would be considered a "substantial amendment" that requires municipality-wide voter approval.

The Clackamas County Board of Commissioners write:

Notably, Clackamas County also requires a countywide vote on any new urban renewal plan since 2013. Although Clackamas County made a local choice to send all new plans to a countywide vote, it would be cumbersome and expensive to send the same plan back to voters for every major amendment, such as refining a planning-level project to include state or federal requirements. Repeated countywide votes also diminish the voice of

residents of the affected community, as well as the county's ability to adjust plans to meet a neighborhood's changing priorities.

1000 Friends of Oregon notes:

Adopting an urban renewal area (URA) already requires a public process and the consent of the largest taxing districts in the affected area. Those local governments that would like to have a public vote on URAs can already do so through local ordinances or charters. A state requirement for a vote is not necessary, and would establish a significant barrier for local governments needing to make investments to support housing development.

COIN suggests that the existing referendum process offers an avenue for voter rejection of URA plans and substantial amendments to URA plans. Perhaps the referendum process could be improved by reducing the signature requirements or lengthening the period of time allow for signature gathering.

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