

Submitter: Chris Toquero

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB947

To the Honorable Members of the House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans,

My name is, Chris Toquero I am writing/speaking today to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 947 (SB 947-A). While presented as a simple modernization of statutory language, this bill proposes changes that carry significant weight regarding the historical understanding of citizen roles and constitutional rights in Oregon.

The core issue lies in the bill's proposal to systematically replace the term "militia" with "National Guard" and, most concerningly, to entirely remove the concept and definition of the "unorganized militia" from Oregon Revised Statutes. This is not merely a semantic update; it strikes at a foundational concept deeply embedded in American legal and historical tradition.

Historically and legally, including under current federal law and Oregon statute prior to this bill's proposed changes, the "militia" encompasses more than just the formal, state-controlled National Guard. It explicitly includes the "unorganized militia," generally understood to consist of the able-bodied citizenry not enrolled in the organized forces. This distinction is crucial. The concept of the citizen militia, the "people" referenced in relation to the security of a free state, is intrinsically linked by many to the Second Amendment's guarantee of the right to keep and bear arms. Removing the "unorganized militia" from state law risks eroding the statutory acknowledgment of this citizen component, which many believe serves as a vital check and a cornerstone of liberty.

Furthermore, equating "militia" solely with the "National Guard" is inaccurate. The National Guard is the organized component, but it is not the entirety of the militia as traditionally and legally understood. This change introduces confusion and disregards the distinct nature of these terms. It attempts to redefine a concept with deep historical roots through legislative fiat.

Opponents view this bill as more than just a cleanup of language. There are concerns that redefining "militia" could be perceived as an attempt to disconnect the citizenry from this concept, potentially paving the way for future restrictions on constitutional rights.

At a time when Oregon faces numerous pressing challenges, dedicating legislative resources to this controversial and, in my view, detrimental redefinition of terms seems a profound misallocation of priorities.

SB 947-A is not a simple or harmless update. It tampers with long-established legal concepts tied to fundamental rights and the relationship between the citizen and the state. I urge you to recognize the significant concerns raised by Oregonians and vote

NO on SB 947.

Thank you for your time and consideration.