

Submitter: Rob Melquist
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB947

RE: Opposition to Senate Bill 947

I am writing to respectfully express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 947, which seeks to remove references to the “unorganized militia” from Oregon statutes. This bill represents a significant departure from both constitutional tradition and practical public policy. I urge you to vote NO on this legislation for the following reasons:

1. It Eliminates a Key Constitutional Concept

Both the United States Constitution and the Oregon Constitution explicitly recognize the term “militia.” Federal law (10 U.S.C. § 246) defines the militia as including both the organized (e.g., National Guard) and unorganized (able-bodied civilians). SB 947 would make Oregon statutes incompatible with federal definitions and ignore the legal and historical foundation of civilian responsibility in defense.

2. It Undermines Civilian Preparedness and Responsibility

The unorganized militia concept reinforces civic readiness and individual responsibility. Civilians have long played a role in emergency response and civil defense. Erasing this designation sends the wrong message about the value of a prepared and engaged citizenry.

3. It Reduces Local Control and Erodes Public Trust

Replacing the broader term “militia” with “National Guard” places all authority in a government-run institution. This could be seen as diminishing community-based efforts and increasing centralized control—moves that may further erode public trust in government.

4. It Risks Narrowing Second Amendment Protections

This bill could be used as a stepping stone to restrict Second Amendment rights by implying that the right to bear arms applies only within government-sanctioned entities. Such a shift would be deeply concerning to Oregonians who value their constitutional freedoms.

5. It Offers No Tangible Public Benefit

SB 947 does not improve public safety, governance, or emergency preparedness.

Instead, it removes long-standing legal language and sets a dangerous precedent for further erosion of constitutional principles without clear justification.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose SB 947. Preserving the unorganized militia in Oregon law upholds constitutional integrity, supports civic preparedness, and maintains public trust in the balance between government authority and citizen involvement.

Thank you for your service and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,
Rob Melquist