

Submitter: John Hafner

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB947

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 947, which seeks to replace the term “militia” with “National Guard” and remove references to the “unorganized militia” from Oregon’s statutes. This bill raises serious constitutional, civic, and public trust concerns, and I urge you to vote against its passage.

First and foremost, SB 947 disregards foundational constitutional language. Both the U.S. Constitution and the Oregon Constitution explicitly recognize the concept of the militia. Moreover, federal law (10 U.S.C. § 246) defines the militia as including both organized elements, like the National Guard, and unorganized civilians. By removing the unorganized militia from state law, Oregon would be out of step with this established federal framework.

In times of emergency or disaster, the unorganized militia has historically served as a civic backbone—comprising able-bodied citizens ready to assist in defense and recovery efforts. Stripping this concept from our laws discourages civilian readiness and undermines a longstanding culture of civic responsibility and local resilience.

Additionally, replacing the broader term “militia” with only the “National Guard” centralizes authority within state-controlled military structures and risks alienating citizens from participating in defense-related roles. Such a move may be seen as an effort to limit local initiative and voluntary engagement, eroding public trust in the government’s intentions.

More troubling is the potential long-term implication of this bill: weakening the constitutional right to bear arms. Removing recognition of the unorganized militia could open the door to future legislation that further restricts individual gun rights by limiting them to state-sanctioned entities.

Finally, SB 947 offers no demonstrable benefit to public safety, governance, or emergency preparedness. Instead, it introduces legal ambiguity and distances Oregon statutes from their constitutional roots, setting a precedent for future erosions of meaningful legal terminology.

For all these reasons, I strongly oppose SB 947 and respectfully urge you and your colleagues in the Legislature to do the same.

Sincerely,
John Hafner