

Submitter: Zach Hall
On Behalf Of: The people
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB947

I am writing to strongly oppose Senate Bill 947 (2025), which proposes replacing “militia” with “National Guard” and removing “unorganized militia” from Oregon state law. This legislation undermines constitutional principles, weakens civilian preparedness, erodes local control, threatens Second Amendment rights, and lacks any clear public benefit. As an Oregonian, I urge you to reject SB 947 and preserve the militia framework that has long served our state and nation. Below, I outline why this bill is deeply flawed and must be stopped.

1. Eliminates a Key Constitutional Concept?The term “militia” is a cornerstone of the U.S. and Oregon Constitutions. The Second Amendment links it to the right to bear arms, while Oregon’s Constitution (Article X, Section 1) recognizes its role in state defense. Federal law (10 U.S.C. § 246) defines the militia as both the organized militia (National Guard) and unorganized militia (able-bodied citizens). By erasing “unorganized militia,” SB 947 creates a disconnect with federal law and disregards a concept upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008). This change risks legal ambiguity and weakens Oregon’s commitment to its constitutional heritage.
2. Undermines Civilian Preparedness?The unorganized militia fosters civic responsibility, encouraging citizens to prepare for emergencies like wildfires or earthquakes, which are all too common in Oregon. These trained individuals can support the National Guard during crises, enhancing community resilience. Programs like Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) align with this ethos. Removing this designation discourages voluntary preparedness, placing undue strain on state resources and diminishing the self-reliant spirit that defines Oregon, especially in rural areas.
3. Reduces Local Control and Public Trust?The unorganized militia empowers communities to participate in local defense and emergency response. Replacing “militia” with “National Guard” centralizes authority in a state- and federally-controlled force, sidelining voluntary local efforts. In Oregon’s rural regions, where skepticism of centralized power is strong, this move could be seen as overreach, deepening distrust in state leadership. Oregonians value local agency—SB 947 threatens to undermine that principle, alienating communities.
4. Threatens Second Amendment Rights?The unorganized militia is integral to the Second Amendment, which protects the right to bear arms for individual and collective defense (*Heller*, 2008). Removing it from state law could enable narrower interpretations of gun rights, potentially limiting them to government-sanctioned forces. Given Oregon’s contentious gun control debates (e.g., Measure 114), SB 947 raises concerns about future restrictions on firearm ownership. This bill risks

becoming a steppingstone to broader disarmament efforts, threatening Oregonians' liberties.

5. Lacks Any Clear Public Benefit?SB 947 offers no evidence that "militia" causes harm or that "National Guard" improves safety, governance, or clarity. Without a compelling rationale, this change is speculative and reckless, risking legal inconsistency and public discontent. It also sets a dangerous precedent for altering constitutional language without justification, potentially threatening other rights. Oregon deserves legislation grounded in necessity, not ideological whims.

Call to Action

SB 947 jeopardizes Oregon's constitutional heritage, civic readiness, local autonomy, and Second Amendment protections. I urge you to:

- Vote against SB 947 in committee and on the floor.
- Demand proponents provide data justifying this change.
- Listen to Oregonians, particularly in rural areas, who oppose this bill.
- Uphold the militia tradition, keeping Oregon's laws aligned with federal and constitutional standards.

Please defend the values that make Oregon strong