

My name is Victoria Wingell, and I'm writing in strong support of HB 2977, the "1% for Wildlife" bill.

I grew up in New Jersey, but like countless others, I was drawn to Oregon years ago for its wilderness and wildlife that inhabit it. The first time I visited, I was blown away by the beauty of the state. The trees were taller, the rivers were bluer, but the wildlife was so special to me. When it was time to continue my college education, I knew I had to be in Oregon. One of the first courses I took when I got here was called Oregon Natural History. Early on, my professor played for us a video of a herd of elk grazing in a meadow as the sun rose, bugling to one another. I had never heard anything like it before. It was powerful, haunting, and majestic. The sound gave me chills. I still remember that moment clearly, and it sparked something in me.

Shortly after, I signed up for an elk survey near my university, and that hands-on experience deepened my love for Oregon's incredible wildlife. I've also been lucky enough to survey the elusive Silver Spotted Butterfly on Mt. Hebo, and as a hiker, backpacker, and rock climber, I still get giddy when I spot the wildlife I am sharing the trail with. These experiences have made me understand why people feel such pride in this state's landscapes and the diverse animals that call it home. For me, these moments have been whimsical, fun, and have deepened my love and appreciation for this awesome state, one that feels more rugged and wild than the one I came from. I never miss an opportunity to invite friends and family from across the country to come visit and see it for themselves.

But it's not all whimsy. Our wildlife is facing serious threats. Habitat loss, invasive species, climate change, and human impacts are pushing more species toward extinction. In fact, nearly one-third of all fish and wildlife species in the U.S. are at elevated risk, and here in Oregon, 294 species are considered "of greatest conservation need." Without bold, proactive investment, we risk losing what makes Oregon so special.

Oregon has already created a blueprint for protecting our natural heritage through the Oregon Conservation Strategy and Nearshore Strategy—but for years, these plans have lacked the resources needed for full implementation.

That's why HB 2977 is so important. By increasing the state's transient lodging tax from 1.5% to 2.5%, we could generate \$30 million annually to conserve and recover Oregon's most vulnerable wildlife and habitats. It's a smart, cost-effective solution to address the biodiversity crisis—and one that would ensure future generations get to experience the same awe and inspiration I felt when I first heard an elk's call. Our state's wildlife deserve this small investment that could make the difference between life and death for many of these cherished species.

Please support HB 2977. It's time we give Oregon's wildlife the resources they need to thrive.

Sincerely,  
Victoria Wingell  
Portland, Oregon