

Paul L. Evans
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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Joint Committee on Ways & Means
Co-Chair, Public Safety Subcommittee on Ways & Means
Joint Transportation Committee
House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 28, 2025

House Committee on Rules
Oregon House of Representatives
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE

Ref: Opposition to HB 2006

Dear Colleagues:

House Bill 2006 (HB 2006) opens the door to a legitimate conversation, but it proposes a solution that will significantly alter the culture as well as the effectiveness of the Oregon State Legislature.

The scale and scope of a single Legislative Assembly is a complex and important topic, deserving of meaningful discussion. Over time, our current hybrid session model has evolved well beyond its original intentions. Considering recent experiences—particularly the COVID-19 pandemic and increasingly severe wildfire seasons—a purposeful, bicameral dialogue is needed to re-examine the fundamental roles and responsibilities of long and short sessions. These changing circumstances call for a fresh and updated perspective on how the Legislature conducts its business.

Unfortunately, HB 2006 proposes a solution that is both arbitrary and capricious. There is no inherent rationale for a bill limit of twenty-five (25). The meager number of vehicles would more than likely accomplish the following: increased authority for the Speaker, the Majority Leader, and most policy committee chairs. This will exacerbate the power differential between leadership, policy, and budget specialists. The reduction will also significantly increase the number of “omnibus bills” leading to a structural and systemic decrease in both simplicity of legislation and transparency of intent.

Much has been made in recent months about the number of bills introduced in this legislative session. Some in the press have even suggested that the sheer volume of proposed legislation is an outlier worthy of concern. But when viewed through a historical and statistical lens, this claim doesn’t hold up. Since the 1980s, the introduction of 3,500 to 4,000 measures per session has been a relative constant. This year is no exception. What *is* different—and what deserves far more attention—is the context in which we’re operating. This year, we are navigating a level of

economic uncertainty and federal instability unlike anything in recent memory. These realities create both pressure and necessity for legislators to explore a broad range of policy responses. In such an environment, the role of legislative measures evolves, they are no longer just proposals; they are frameworks for discussion, tools for negotiation, and placeholders for urgent or evolving priorities. The modern legislative process benefits from having many similar but distinct options on the table. Far from being redundant, these alternatives provide policymakers with the flexibility to weigh trade-offs, refine ideas, and adapt to shifting circumstances. Especially in times of uncertainty, a diversity of proposals enables more informed and responsive decision-making. Experience has taught us that a high volume of legislation is not a sign of dysfunction, but of diligence. In times like these, more ideas—grounded in real needs and shaped through robust debate—can only strengthen the policymaking process.

Culture and custom have sustained a “fill-the-holes” approach to policy committee and leadership selection. In our environment, a long-sitting chair has near dictatorial power in preventing ideas from being legitimately considered. This demands those of us not members of specific committees and/or welcomed into the entrenched “stakeholder” community to find creative ways to advance ideas. That is not possible without a measure; it should be, but hard-won lessons have taught me that it remains out of grasp. Stand-alone bills can generate a spark great enough to transcend the normal mechanics.

Over the past sixteen (16) decades, Oregon’s tradition of self-government has evolved in step with the changing needs of our people and places. Through every era of growth and challenge, Oregonians have demonstrated a commitment to dialogue, participation, and progress. That legacy demands we protect a public process that remains as healthy, robust, and spirited as the people it serves. Today, the problems we face are more complex and interdependent than those of a century ago. Whether it’s housing, climate resilience, health care, or education, the issues no longer lend themselves to one-size-fits-all solutions. In this reality, it is essential that the legislative process allow space for “ideas on paper”—for competing, creative, and sometimes overlapping proposals to be introduced, debated, and refined. Some legislators represent districts with a wide range of community needs, values, and priorities. As our state continues to grow and diversify, those variations will only increase. We need more tools—not fewer—to reflect that complexity in the policymaking process. House Bill 2006, which proposes to limit the number of bills individual legislators may introduce, raises serious concerns. The proposed cap of 25 measures may seem reasonable at first glance, but in practice, it risks stifling the very dynamism and responsiveness that a healthy democracy requires. The pace of policy demand—and the pace of constituent expectations—is not slowing down. If this bill advances, many of those who support it today may soon regret the unintended consequences it could unleash. By constraining the number of ideas that can be brought forward, we limit the Legislature’s ability to explore, adapt, and respond in real time to the needs of Oregonians. Innovation, inclusion, and responsiveness are not byproducts of democracy—they are its foundation. We should be careful not to weaken that foundation in the name of efficiency.

HB 2006 will yield an undefendable, undeniable zero-sum gain for the presiding officers. It will also be a “win” for corporate lobbyists and all who seek to constrain innovation in the State of Oregon. While people of good conscience can disagree, and at times vigorously, I fervently believe the “fever” surrounding this bill is an artificial construct. There are people who will

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benefit from limits, and it is a solution for the wrong problem. Simply put, if we need more people to manage our work more efficiently – hire more people – not muzzle duly elected representatives. We are elected to be effective, not efficient.

Taking this tool away is a clear and present danger to the autonomy of all ninety elected legislators to do the duties we are elected to fulfill. It favors legislators with policy gavels, safe districts, and lobbyists who know it is easier to thwart legislation than advance it. the appropriate mechanism for bringing an idea forward (that would result in uniform aka arbitrary limits) the eighty-eight members who do not serve as presiding officers will become increasingly irrelevant. This is especially true for the fifteen (15) or so of us who must actively campaign every two (2) to four (4) years.

In conclusion, I urge you to oppose House Bill 2006 in the strongest possible terms. While I understand the frustrations some have voiced regarding the flow of legislative work during the 2025 Session, I fundamentally disagree with both the definition of the problem presented and the proposed solution. On a personal note, I have spent much of my adult life in uniform, defending the right of all Americans—all Oregonians—to free and unrestricted speech. That right must extend not only to individuals but also to the elected officials chosen to represent their communities. How can we claim to champion free speech as a core value, while simultaneously placing statutory limits on the ability of those elected to be the people's voice? This is the wrong solution to the wrong problem. It undermines the principles of representative democracy and restricts the very tools needed to meet the challenges of our time. I respectfully but firmly ask you to vote no on HB 2006.

Respectfully,