

SCR 204 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Carrier: Sen. Wagner

Senate Committee On Rules

Action Date: 02/04/26

Action: Do adopt.

Vote: 5-0-0-0

Yea: 5 - Golden, Jama, Manning Jr, Starr, Thatcher

Fiscal: No fiscal impact

Revenue: No revenue impact

Prepared By: Leslie Porter, LPRO Analyst

Meeting Dates: 2/4

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

The measure recognizes, honors, and celebrates the contributions and value of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) on the 120th anniversary of its founding and encourages continued collaboration between the Legislative Assembly and its county partners.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Duties of and services provided by counties
- Members of the Legislative Assembly who are former county commissioners
- Importance of the relationship between the Legislative Assembly and counties

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

In 1906, Oregon county governments formed the State Association of County Judges and Commissioners to support and represent Oregon's counties in legislative matters. In 1936, it evolved into the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC). AOC is composed of the 36 Oregon counties and their elected commissioners, judges, and chairs. Participants work to foster nonpartisan, consensus-based policies and build solutions-oriented partnerships with the state to guarantee effective service delivery. For 120 years, AOC has played a pivotal role in protecting and enhancing the ability of Oregon counties to provide essential public services and effectively address community needs and priorities through legislative advocacy, professional development, the promotion of best practices, and the fostering of collaboration among elected officials.

Oregon counties administer all local, state, and federal elections; maintain the property tax system; operate libraries; provide social safety net services; and administer local public and community mental health programs, workforce services, and county Veteran Services Offices. They also provide county public safety functions, support public infrastructure, and facilitate development to ensure community growth and preserve natural resources.

AOC Advocacy Efforts Over the Years

In the 1930s, AOC supported the passage of early federal "Payment in Lieu of Taxes" legislation. It championed the first county planning law in 1947 and the 1973 Land Conservation and Development Act, which made planning and development regulation mandatory. In the 1950s, it advocated for a property appraisal program that reduced inequities in Oregon's property tax system. In 1961, it sponsored legislation delegating to counties the power to convert to the Board of County Commissioner system if the county judge no longer had any judicial functions. That same year, it worked to expand state shared revenues of net liquor receipts with counties. That initiative expanded to cigarette tax revenues in 1965 and lottery revenues in 1991.

SCR 204 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

From 1963 to 1966, AOC secured double federal appropriations for National Forest road construction. In 1964, it generated Oregon's first county roads inventory and needs study. In 1976, AOC's support was crucial to passing the National Forest Management Act. In 1987, it created the Forest Trust Land Advisory Committee, composed of forest trust land county commissioners who provided input on the management of Oregon forests to the Oregon Board of Forestry and the state forester. In 1989, AOC assisted with the creation of the County Assessment Function Funding Assistance program, which benefited local taxing districts and the public.

In 1990, AOC created the Integrated Road Information System, which played a critical role in county public asset management. In 2000, it advocated for the passage of the federal Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act to stabilize revenue to counties that previously relied on fluctuating timber revenues. In 2014, it helped create the Regional Solutions Program. In 2024, it partnered with state and local public safety agencies to form a new deflection model for people suffering from substance use disorders.

In the past two decades, AOC has played a key role in passing state and federal legislation to bolster intergovernmental partnership and deliver efficient and effective public services, including major shared revenue-based state transportation packages that have kept travelers safe and moving.