

Submitter: Heather Harter
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1553

On behalf of the Klamath County Chamber of Commerce and the businesses we represent throughout Klamath County, we respectfully submit this letter in opposition to Senate Bill 1553.

The Chamber represents over 600 employers across a broad range of sectors, all of which rely on safe, reliable, and affordable electricity to operate. Our primary concern with SB 1553 is that it targets our local electric service provider in a manner that could undermine the utility's financial stability and governance, creating downstream impacts that would be borne directly by the businesses and communities that depend on that service.

Electric utilities are capital-intensive entities responsible for maintaining critical infrastructure, managing wildfire risk, complying with extensive regulatory oversight, and ensuring uninterrupted service. Measures that impose extraordinary financial obligations, retroactive liabilities, or altered settlement structures increase uncertainty and risk. That uncertainty ultimately affects ratepayers, including businesses, through higher electricity rates, reduced system investment, deferred maintenance, or diminished reliability.

For Klamath County employers, electricity is not a discretionary expenditure; it is essential to daily operations. Manufacturers, agricultural producers, health care providers, retailers, and service businesses all depend on predictable energy costs and dependable service. Any legislation that destabilizes the local electric provider threatens business continuity, job retention, and future investment in our region.

Additionally, the Chamber is concerned that SB 1553 appears to circumvent the judicial process by legislatively intervening in matters where settlements and related issues are currently under appeal. The integrity of Oregon's legal system depends on allowing courts to fully adjudicate disputes without legislative interference. Bypassing or preempting the judiciary in active or unresolved cases undermines due process, creates precedent risk, and injects uncertainty into the rule of law. These conditions are harmful to both utilities and the businesses that rely on them.

Businesses value predictability, fairness, and respect for established legal processes. Legislative actions that retroactively alter outcomes or override judicial review erode confidence not only in the legal system, but also in Oregon's overall business climate.

The Klamath County Chamber of Commerce has consistently opposed increases in

electrical rates, as demonstrated by our formal testimony submitted to the Oregon Public Utility Commission regarding the most recent rate increases requested by Pacific Power. Accordingly, we are highly sensitive to proposed legislation, rules, or regulations that risk imposing additional financial burdens on our member businesses.

For these reasons, the Klamath County Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges the Senate Committee on Judiciary to oppose SB 1553. We encourage the Committee to carefully consider the broader economic and legal ramifications of this bill, particularly its impacts on electric system stability, ratepayers, and the integrity of the judicial process.

Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to provide the perspective of the Klamath County business community.

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