



Feb 16th 2026 - RE: SB 1517 – Oppose

Dear Chairman Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

This is Pete Wallstrom with Momentum River Expeditions, and we are writing to strongly oppose SB 1517.

As the committee knows, Oregon is an outlier when it comes to recognizing liability waivers. Oregon is now one of the most difficult places to run an outdoor recreation business — insurance premiums and legal costs are increasing much faster than inflation, and options for obtaining insurance are dwindling. This is more than a ski area issue; they were the canary in the coal mine. This also affects guided outdoor recreation, outdoor events, gyms, and more.

Outdoor recreation is a huge part of Oregon's economy and one of the main reasons many of us live here. The outdoor industry is largely made up of small businesses. If we do not make the common-sense changes that ORCA proposes and align with other states, recreation as we know it in Oregon will only be for rich people — people that can afford the prices we will have to charge to deal with lawyers and finding insurance.

The current situation in Oregon is extremely out of balance, and it is not good for:

- Guides and small businesses
- Oregon's wild areas and access to the outdoors
- Oregon's economy
- Consumers
- What it means to live in Oregon

This issue has been worsening for 10 years, and we are now at a tipping point.

SB 1517 is a complicated and untested attempt at a solution that is universally opposed by the many small businesses that get people outside and help keep Oregonians fit. And, in many cases, it would make our current situation worse than it already is.

To our knowledge, the only organization that supports SB 1517-7 is the Oregon Trial Lawyers Association. Which brings me to what I said during in person testimony to your committee a few weeks ago. As a small business owner, as someone who believes in the power of good government, here is what is so depressing about this issue:

On one side, you have guides and outfitters across the state. All we want to do is show people the outdoors - it's what we love. And hopefully, make enough money to maybe retire - nothing crazy, nobody is getting rich. On the same side, you have ski areas, and in Oregon that means mostly small businesses and non-profits, You have gyms that help keep Oregonians fit.

You have the most effective environmental groups in the state,
You have trail groups and non-profits that get people outside
And you have consumers who want to be able to afford outdoor activities.

All of us are on this one side - begging for help.

And on the other side, you have a very small, very wealthy, and very connected group of lawyers who donate A LOT of money to the Oregon Legislature. And you have the largest personal injury law firm in the country, a giant corporation, over 1 billion dollars, moving into Oregon - thinking 'yeah, Oregon is where we need to be.'

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You would think, in Oregon, we would be listening to the people that get Oregonians outside, the people that protect Oregon's wild areas, the people that build trails, the people who just want to afford to get outside. Mostly blue collar small business owners and nonprofits.

But no, we are listening to this small group of already rich lawyers and a giant corporate law firm. It makes no sense. Is this how we want Oregon to be?

Luckily, we have SB 1593 - ORCA – it is a simple, balanced and well tested solution that is already proven to work - and is what every other Western State already does (and Oregon used to do). One that balances inherent risk and people's ability to seek compensation for an accident. And one, unlike SB 1517, has broad and overwhelming bi-partisan support.

Please, please support SB 1593. A small, very wealthy group of trial lawyers should not have complete control over affordable Outdoor access in Oregon. And over guides and outfitters who just want to show people rivers.

It is depressing and not Oregon.

Thank you,

Pete Wallstrom
Owner | Guide

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