



**Testimony Opposing SJR 201**  
**February 16, 2026**

I write today in strong opposition to SJR 201 and any proposal that would allow the State of Oregon to retain tax revenues that, under our Constitution, belong to the people.

The Oregon “kicker” is not a loophole. It is not an accident. It is not discretionary. It is a constitutional protection approved by voters that requires surplus revenue — when collections exceed the forecast by more than two percent — to be returned to taxpayers. Most recently, that constitutional formula generated approximately \$1.41 billion in personal kicker credits statewide. That is not government money. That is taxpayer money.

All over Oregon, families and small businesses are navigating sustained inflation, rising utility costs, housing pressures, workforce shortages, and higher operating expenses across the board. From Portland to Asland to our rural communities in Eastern Oregon, purchasing power matters. When kicker funds are returned, they are not stockpiled; they are spent locally: on groceries, car repairs, medical bills, fuel, rent, and reinvestment in small businesses. That activity strengthens local economies and supports community stability.

SJR 201 proposes to change the rules after this fact. It would allow the state to retain a portion of surplus revenue that the Constitution currently requires to be returned. That is not fiscal discipline. That is moving the goalposts.

If state government is collecting more than projected, the responsible course of action is not to keep the excess, it is to examine why forecasts were off and ensure spending is aligned with realistic revenue expectations. Oregon families must live within their means. The businesses here in Linn & Benton County must live within their means. Local governments must prioritize. The State of Oregon should be held to the same standard.

We continue to hear that the funds could be used for worthy causes such as education or wildfire response. Those priorities already belong within the regular budgeting process. The kicker exists specifically because lawmakers chose to spend, based on projected revenue. When revenue exceeds those projections beyond the constitutional threshold, it is returned. That is how accountability works. Oregonians are increasingly concerned about transparency and responsiveness in state government. Attempts to redirect constitutionally protected refunds erode trust. It sends the message that when citizens establish guardrails, those guardrails can be reworked when politically convenient.

Instead of altering a constitutional safeguard that has been in place for decades, the Legislature should demonstrate serious efforts to eliminate inefficiencies, sunset underperforming programs, reduce administrative growth, and prioritize core services. Government expansion should not be financed by

retaining money that was explicitly promised back to taxpayers. The Oregon budget continues to grow, while the everyday citizens struggle and businesses exit to more business-friendly states who incentivize business and have healthy economies for their citizens. Excessive taxation is driving this state into the ground, and you continue to turn a blind eye to reality.

Oregonians deserve predictability. They deserve integrity in government budgeting and spending. And they deserve to have the Constitution respected.

I urge you to reject SJR 201 and uphold the principle that surplus revenue belongs to the people who earned it.

Thank you.



Carmelle Bielenberg

President & CEO

Albany Area Chamber of Commerce