

Submitter: Bruce Bishop
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517

March 1, 2026

The Honorable Dacia Grayber
Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St NE, H-492,
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Senate Bill 1517A-11

Dear Representative Grayber:

I am writing as a constituent and because of your membership on the House Rules Committee to urge your support of SB 1517, but only with at least the addition of the A-11 amendments to the Senate-approved version.

Oregon has unparalleled natural resources and recreation opportunities, and both public and private land managers are challenged to maintain safe and accessible environments for their visitors and customers. One of the ways they can strive to keep operating costs lower is by asking invitees to sign liability waivers. A less desirable approach is to close their lands to public access. But increasingly, that option is being chosen.

While it won't solve access problems altogether, SB 1517 will help balance the interests of users and owners and align Oregon by adopting recreational liability standards already applicable in many other states. Let me describe one example of this issue.

In August 2014, a visitor from Illinois and family members hiked to Ramona Falls above Mt. Hood's upper Sandy River. The last in his group to cross the river, Brent Ludwig died when a high water surge knocked out the seasonal pedestrian bridge installed by the U. S. Forest Service ("USFS") in a wilderness area of the Mt. Hood National Forest. In over a decade since then, the USFS has not made the bridge available for hikers.

In *Ludwig v. United States**, an Illinois federal court ruled that the United States was immune from legal liability for Mr. Ludwig's accidental death because of its immunity under the Oregon recreational use statute. Like many other National Forest users, the Ludwig party had purchased Northwest Forest Passes to be able to park their

vehicles at the trailhead before starting on the seven-mile roundtrip hike. The government's immunity in this case turned on whether the "pass" was a use fee or a parking fee.

But since 2014, there's been no pedestrian bridge over the Sandy River. As a result, hikers to Ramona Falls now must either ford the river or use fallen logs that are a challenge to climb on and around. Both courses carry significant risks. Many groups with small children, pets, or members with balance or other physical challenges can't visit Ramona Falls, one of Mt. Hood's favorite hiking destinations. Personally, I haven't crossed the Sandy River without the bridge.

Please support SB 1517A with the -11 amendment.

Thank you for your public safety work both in the community and at the Capitol.

Best regards, Bruce Bishop

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*<https://casetext.com/case/ludwig-v-united-states-10?fbclid=IwAR1s-w5Qzb9mYmbYQWwq8HoJ0g2Plk2x-QrYyyt2oK0fXiqhUwyFynXBgFU>