

From: [Tom Salzer](#)
To: [Exhibits HAGLU](#)
Subject: Testimony on HB 2958
Date: Saturday, February 23, 2019 12:13:01 PM

Dear Chair Clem and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District, I write in opposition to HB 2958 as proposed and offer a possible modification.

The requirement for some directors of soil and water conservation districts in Oregon to own or manage 10 or more acres of land dates back to the birth of conservation districts following the Dust Bowl. Governance of SWCDs by people rooted in the management of land and water resources has been, and continues to be, a core tenet of conservation districts. People connected to the land are better able to understand the issues their neighbors are facing and are better equipped to provide appropriate governance and assistance.

HB 2958 would change this fundamental principle across the entire state. There is simply no compelling reason to change SWCD director qualifications for every conservation district in the state. The current system has worked well since conservation districts were formed.

However, times have changed. More explicitly, population and development have resulted in the conversion of farmland into retail and industrial parks and into single and multi-family housing. In densely populated areas, it can be difficult for a conservation district to find qualified candidates for the positions that require land ownership or management. Citizens may also perceive a sense of inequity when the vast majority of the population has little or nothing to do with farming, ranching, or any other natural resource-based business.

If a change is felt to be necessary, the Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District urges that the requirement for land ownership or management be continued. The majority of SWCD board directors must continue to be connected to the ownership or management of land. Thus, for a seven-member board, at least four members must continue to meet the land ownership/management requirement. For a five-member board, at least three members must meet the land ownership/management requirement.

We believe this slight modification would improve equity and still maintain the fundamental principle upon which soil and water conservation districts are founded: governance by local citizens who are rooted in land and resource management.

Thank you for your consideration of Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District's position.

Tom Salzer, General Manager
Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District