

MEASURE: SB 904
EXHIBIT: G
Senate Finance and Revenue 76th Session
DATE: 05-16-2011 PAGES: 3
SUBMITTED BY: GREG LEO

From: Greg Leo
To: Warner Paul D; Sen Burdick; Sen Morse; Sen Hass; Sen Telfer; Longacre Julia
Cc: Sen Girod; "Rod Yoder"; Fred Netter; Marc Anderson; debrac@woodburnamb.com
Subject: Letter of Strong Opposition - SB 904 - Airport Tax Increment Districts -Aurora Rural Fire District
Date: Friday, April 29, 2011 12:59:18 PM
Attachments: Final SB 940 C.pdf

Chair Burdick and Members of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee:

For the record, please find attached our second strong letter of opposition to SB 904, which has been referred to the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee. We have previously sent a strong letter of opposition to the Senate Business, Transportation and Economic Development Committee.

We hope you allow this misguided legislation to die in your Committee without any further action. We are one of the tax districts who would be harmed by SB 904 if it were to pass your Committee and become Oregon law. At a time of increasing life safety demands, this is no time to divert District property tax revenues to private purposes. We have, we hope, clearly outlined for you the many negative impacts of this legislation and reasons why we have voted a second time as a Board to send a second letter of strong opposition to SB 904.

We have met with each member of the Senate Revenue Committee expressing our strong opposition. Please let us know if you have any questions about our strong opposition to SB 904.

Thank you!

Authorized by President Fred Netter and the unanimous vote of the Aurora Rural Fire District Board of Directors

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Senator Ginny Burdick, Chair
Senator Frank Morse, Vice Chair
Senator Mark Hass
Senator Chris Telfer
Senate Finance and Revenue Committee
900 Court St. NE Room 143
Salem, OR 97301

P.O. BOX 9 • AURORA, OR 97002

Concerning: Opposition to Senate Bill 904 – Urban Renewal for the Aurora Airport

April 20, 2011

Dear Senator Burdick & Members of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee:

On March 16, 2011 and again on April 20, 2011, the Board of Directors of the Aurora Rural Fire Protection District voted unanimously to write a letter voicing strong opposition to Senate Bill 904. We strongly oppose this misuse of Urban Renewal Authority and urge you to oppose this misguided legislation. We urge you to let this misuse of public money die in your Committee.

The proposed 'tax increment finance district' would remove essential revenues, and much of the revenue growth from our tax base, at a time when changes at the Aurora State Airport are generating greater demand for services. It is notable that we responded to five aircraft incidents in the last year, a growing and very expensive use of Aurora Rural Fire Protection District life safety services.

The unusual distribution of publicly generated tax increment revenues to private entities contemplated in SB 904 is an egregious misuse of urban renewal authority. Urban Renewal is intended to mitigate "blight", not be used for the provision of "services" including "maintenance" and other "essential airport operations efforts". Many school districts, fire districts, ports, and other Special Service Districts have long complained about the misuse of urban renewal revenues. This bill extends this traditional objection to the misuse of urban renewal to financing private development that does not provide public benefit, and thereby is fatally flawed.

There is much to dislike about this bill, but the most offensive to local sensibilities is the complete disregard of local public interests in the entirely inadequate

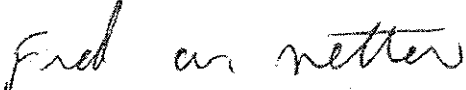
'governance' by the "airport sponsor", which is likely a Salem-based state agency. Three-fourths of the people making decisions in this scheme are private interests, while only a quarter of the 'governance' would be public entities, none of whom are locally elected and accountable to the taxpayers who are ultimately paying the tax bills.

The Fire District is responsible for life safety and fire services at the Aurora State Airport, as well as a sixty-four square mile area which includes: six miles of I-5, the Cities of Donald and Aurora, five miles of 99-E, two major railroad lines, Champoeg State Park, the Baldock Rest Areas, Lenhardt private airport, the North Marion and Canby School Districts campuses, and the high pressure petroleum and natural gas pipelines. The life safety calls on the I-5 corridor have increased to about 52% of all District calls, most of which are medical emergencies and motor vehicle accidents, many of our calls are generated from State of Oregon managed facilities, including roadways, airports, and rest areas, but are currently paid by district residents through their property taxes.

We urge you to defeat SB 904 – it is a legislative concept fundamentally flawed beyond repair. It would create an onerous burden on this hardworking fire and life safety service provider, which would ultimately result in a hardship on local taxpayers and life saving services to thousands of Oregonians who expect us to be there when our services are needed most.

We ask that this bill die so that our small, but hardworking district can rely on stable funding and support for the many fire and life safety demands you place on this and other rural fire districts, which provide critically important services along Oregon's highways, rest areas, railways, pipelines, airports, schools, and parks.

Few issues before you matter as much as this bill does to us. Please stop this misguided legislation from becoming law.

Sincerely, 

Fred Netter, for the Board of Directors
President
Aurora Rural Fire Protection District