

Captain Bill Fugate – Oregon State Police

Good afternoon Chair Beyer, Vice Chair Thomsen and members of the committee, my name is Bill Fugate and I am a Captain with the Oregon State Police. I am here today to voice my agency support for Senate Bill 532.

I have been a police officer for over twenty years, 6 working for city police agencies and 14 years with the Oregon State Police. I drive over 40 thousand miles a year in my official capacity as a state police employee and in my private life.

Like most of you, I spend many hours a week driving on multiple lane state highways. Unfortunately the highway is not being used efficiently by travelers. There are those drivers who drive in the left lane and do not allow other drivers to pass even when they have an opportunity to do so.

As I drive in my personal vehicle on I-5, these drivers refuse to move to the right even when there is space for them to do so. My decision is to be respectful and follow for miles hoping they realize their failure to share our highway. Others tailgate these drivers with the hope the discomfort encourages them to move over. This is unsafe. Others are more aggressive making bad lane changes, driving over the speed limit to maneuver around that left lane driver. This too is unsafe.

Some may believe the left lane drivers engaged in this behavior are not paying attention and this law may be pointless. I made two trips to Portland from Salem last week in my police vehicle. As I drove I encountered these left lane campers who were obviously not sharing the road. Time and time again as I came up behind these drivers in my police vehicle, they moved over. They are aware of their driving behavior.

At the Oregon State Police we focus enforcement efforts on the five driving behaviors that tend to lead to serious injury and fatal crashes. Those behaviors are summarized in the acronym SOLID. Speed, Occupant Safety, Lane Usage, Impaired Driving and Distracted Driving. According to ODOT, traffic fatalities are trending higher than they have in years past. Last year, 495 people were killed on Oregon's Highways. It is my belief that this bill, if passed, would prevent some of those frustrated drivers from making poor driving decisions or engaging in road rage.

To note, I am not trying to assert myself as an expert in highway engineering or in traffic efficiencies. And to be fair, I would also like to add that it is possible if this bill is passed the left lane may not be used in fear of enforcement action, decreasing the effectiveness of the highway. It would necessary to educate the public on the new law and expectations of their driving behavior such as the "move over" law.

In closing, I would like to mention if we can prevent even one fatality from occurring by the passage of this bill that will be a success. Thank you for your time and I can take any questions.