

'Yes' men and women only for state education board: Editorial valley

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Kim Sordyl(AP Photo/Ryan J. Foley)

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By **The Oregonian Editorial Board**

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Rep. Margaret Doherty, D-Tigard, introduced an [interesting draft of a bill](#) to the House Education Committee last week. And by "interesting," we mean "you've got to be kidding."

The bill, which the education committee agreed to sponsor for the short legislative session, would change the law allowing the Secretary of State and Treasurer to send "designees" to serve as non-voting members of the state board of education. Instead, they would only be allowed to send their deputy secretary of state or treasurer, as [the Portland Tribune reported](#).

This would seem out of left field except for the fact that it would help the board get rid of Portland parent Kim Sordyl, who serves as Secretary of State Dennis Richardson's designee. Sordyl, a former employment lawyer, has been a [vocal critic of Portland Public Schools'](#) management as well as state education department practices.

Oregonian editorials

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Sordyl, to put it lightly, [gets under people's skin](#). She can be acerbic, cutting and relentless in her accusations of mismanagement, incompetence or cronyism. Unfortunately for her critics, she is also often right, as she has shown in her scrutiny of Portland schools, highlighting instances in which the district [violated state law](#), ignored its own policies and put the [careers of administrators](#) or teachers above the interests of students. She has often questioned the way things have been done, particularly when they don't work. Those are qualities that, to most of us, would seem to be reasons to keep her on the board of education, no matter people's hurt feelings.

And there's simply no reason to change the law. According to the Tribune story, Doherty said board members have to deal with sensitive information. That's hardly a rationale, particularly considering that [by law the governor appoints members of the community](#) - not her own staff - to also serve on the board. The idea here is that the board and the department benefit from having regular members of the public who are passionate about education provide their input and opinions - even if they don't rubber stamp what state education staff might put forward.

And considering the condition of Oregon's education system, the lack of progress in graduation rates, continuing achievement gaps, board members and department staff might want to focus on growing thicker skin and recognizing that criticism can be a good thing. Because certainly the status quo has not been.

-The Oregonian/OregonLive Editorial Board