

February 11, 2018

House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee  
Oregon State Legislature  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St., NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Opposition to HB 4029

Chair Clem, Vice-Chairs McLain and Sprenger, and Members of the Committee:

I write to register my strong opposition to HB 4029, the legislation which would ban a footbridge over the upper Deschutes River. As an almost 40 year resident of Bend and Central Oregon, one of the things which has been distinctive about living here is the community effort to reach collaborative solutions to issues. The submission and consideration of HB 4029 is anything but a collaborative effort to resolve a community issue.

The process by which this legislation has come forward, both in the 2017 legislative session and the current session is troubling, however, that should not be the focus. What should be the focus instead, is the intrusion into the arena of local control and local decision making which passage of this legislation would directly accomplish. There are no extraordinary circumstances which should even allow consideration of supplanting the local decision making process in this instance.

Environmental concerns and protecting a scenic waterway designation have been cited as the drivers for promoting this legislation. The contradiction present in espousing these concerns is apparent to many within the local communities, including many who are advocates for protecting our natural resources from a variety of perspectives, whether environmentalists, outdoor enthusiasts or those who just appreciate having smart and continued access to nature. To argue that banning a footbridge is the only mechanism to protect the natural landscape, water and riparian areas impacted by such a decision is to blatantly ignore the environmental benefits that continued development of a designated trail system through this area, including a connector bridge, would address.

One of the driving forces behind decisions made by me during the time I spent in the Legislature, was whether proposed legislation was first and foremost, the appropriate way to approach an issue presented. I would proffer that in this circumstance, it is not. This is an issue of local control lending itself to the local decision making process pursuant to existing law. Changing this process would be an unnecessary precedent by superseding local control and decision making. What should be encouraged, instead, is a collaborative process between the various local stakeholders and community members to work towards a common solution.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Judy Stiegler  
Former Oregon State Representative