



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE MAJORITY

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House Votes to Simplify Process for Removing Racist Language in Deeds

SALEM – The Oregon House of Representatives passed legislation today that would provide an improved process to remove discriminatory restrictions and language from real estate documents.

House Bill 4134A came about after co-chief sponsor Rep. Julie Fahey (D-West Eugene, Bethel, Junction City) discovered discriminatory “restrictive covenant” in the deed to her home. These covenants, primarily from the first half of the 20th century, prevented some people, based on their race, from buying or renting in certain communities. This legislation updates the legal process to remove the discriminatory covenants.

“My husband and I purchased a home a few years and discovered that there was a restriction in the deed saying “only members of the Caucasian race” could live in the subdivision,” Rep. Fahey said. “While there is a process to change the language now, we found it was difficult and expensive.”

“Racist, divisive language like this has no place anywhere in our society,” Rep. Fahey added.

The enforcement of these covenants was ruled unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in the 1940s and made illegal altogether by the Fair Housing Act of 1968. Still, the language endures in the deeds of some homes built prior to the 1950s.

“I am glad we can begin to make this language less pervasive in our real estate documents,” said Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer (D-Portland), another co-chief sponsor on the legislation. “Only when we acknowledge and rectify the relics of our racist past in all parts of our society, can we begin to move Oregon forward.”

The Oregon House Democratic caucus is committed to seeking justice and equal rights for all, and building strong communities that are welcoming, accessible, and safe for everyone. Other House Democratic sponsors of this legislation include Rep. Mark Meek (D-Gladstone), Rep. Teresa Alonso Leon (D-Woodburn), Rep. Janelle Bynum (D-Happy Valley), Rep. Mitch Greenlick (D-Portland), Rep. Diego Hernandez (D-Portland), Rep. Carla Piluso (D-Gresham), Rep. Karin Power (D-Milwaukie), Rep. Jeff Reardon (D-Happy Valley), Rep. Andrea Salinas (D-Lake Oswego), Rep. Tawna Sanchez (D-Portland), and Rep. Brad Witt (D-Clatskanie).

The bill, which passed 59 to 0, now goes to the Oregon Senate for consideration.

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