



OREGON STATE SENATE

My no vote on this bill has nothing to do with the merit or validity of the legislation at hand, and solely to do with the mangled legislative system that brought it forward. What we have seen in recent years and culminating today in the second reckless session in less than six weeks, is the erosion of the moral guiding principles that define a functioning Legislature. The task and burden we bear as legislators is to define the standards by which our society is governed, and our citizens judged. At its core, a Legislature should be built on honesty, transparency, and accountability. Sadly, they have all but disappeared in our chambers.

Honesty is crucial in ensuring that we craft the most comprehensive legislation. In its simplest form, honesty is having every affected party at the table with an equal opportunity to weigh in on the matters. What we saw today however was a rushed process in which that opportunity was not afforded to the people. Instead our Democrat majority chairs chose to rush this bill through committee, closing it off to invited testimony only. This is testimony that only the Chairs (Democrats) had a say in choosing. The delusion that this bill had properly been vetted starts to shatter here.

In terms of transparency, our system was designed with a series of checks to make sure that we are doing our work under the purview of the public eye. The Majority Party cannot honestly believe that they are being transparent, when they make the legislation public less than 48 hours before it is going to be voted on! To then deny the public access to their building, and the minority any viable form of impacting the legislation (cannot submit bills, did not have time to draft amendments, and minorities in every committee so we cannot vote it down) makes a mockery of the very notion of transparency.

And lastly, accountability. We have a responsibility to hold ourselves accountable to the people who trust us to come up here and defend their rights. A key component of accountability in our building is the public's ability to come, lobby their legislators, and voice their opinions on the legislation. With no information sessions for public comment and a session that ran at breakneck speed, the people never stood a chance. Instead the Democrat supermajority chose to showcase their elite ability to dictate everyone's lives from the dais, with no remorse for the death of an honorable legislative process.

For all these reasons, and for the sake of advocating for a just and ethical process, I voted no.