



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 4, 2024

Timothy G. Sekerak
Chief Clerk of the House
State Capitol Building
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Vote Explanation – HB 4045 B

Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I voted in support of HB 4045 B with reservations. This bill includes many changes which are long overdue. I am heartened that our state is finally recognizing the importance of our firefighters and state hospital workers by correctly classifying the work they do as hazardous, which entitles these people to retire earlier. However, the bill also classifies district attorneys as police officers, entitling them to an earlier retirement, as well. Last year, I voted against HB 2054 A for this exact reason.

The purpose of an earlier retirement is to properly compensate employees in hazardous positions for the demanding and dangerous work they do. Firefighters, state hospital workers, and police officers put their lives and safety on the line every day to keep our communities safe. They are subject to many stressors and consistently in harm's way. HB 4045 B properly recognizes this and allows these workers to access appropriate benefits.

However, while district attorneys play an important role in the safety of our communities, they do not have the same hardships or stressors or hardships in their work. District attorneys and deputy district attorneys are not out in the community, and they don't have the same risk of injury or death. Additionally, district attorneys make significantly more money than their public defender counterparts who are not public employees. Recruitment and retention of attorneys in both defense and prosecution is important and necessary. However, this legislation exacerbates the already unequal treatment of district attorneys and public defenders while proving to be an expensive additional burden on Oregon cities and counties. Thus, I do not believe that they should be in the same category as police officers.

However, as an attorney, I also know that the best compromise is one which leaves all sides a little bit unhappy but moves the matter forward. HB 4045 B is a compromise of that sort. While I do not think that the reclassification of district attorneys is the right decision, I strongly support the changes that this bill makes to retirement provisions for firefighters and state hospital workers. For that reason, I voted for HB 4045 B.


Representative Tom Andersen

