

**RACHEL ARMITAGE**  
**STATE SENATOR**  
DISTRICT 16



**OREGON STATE SENATE**

**Vote Explanation for SB 1510**

March 2nd, 2022

Dear Mr. President,

I spent weeks considering how I would vote on this bill, and ultimately decided that my vote would be a no.

I am deeply troubled by police brutality in our country and in our state. I have heard too many stories of BIPOC Americans, friends, and even colleagues here in the Capitol who have been intimidated, bullied, and threatened by police. While I know that as a white woman I am unlikely to experience that kind of fear, I am motivated to address this problem and hold police accountable. Every driver in Oregon should feel safe behind the wheel of their car. No Oregonian should live in fear of the police.

For these reasons, it was difficult to ultimately vote against this bill. I feel that while the overarching goals of the bill are important, the language of sections 5-8 made it harmful for my district. Part of me wishes I could have overlooked my concerns about these sections and voted yes. But I just couldn't get there; my concerns were too overwhelming. I believe that the pursuit of justice must be restorative wherever possible. We must strive to pass legislation that makes all parties whole. This bill does not do that.

In the best case, this bill will mean more cars on the road without proper headlights, taillights, or brake lights. This presents real dangers for ALL motorists in my rural district. A number of roads in Senate District 16 are in disrepair. Just this session, we passed HB 4053 to study Highway 6, which has seen an increase in injuries and fatalities due to its declining condition. Much of the district is mountainous. Nearly every road between the Pacific Ocean and St. Helens winds around steep mountains. There are abundant wildlife that cross our roads and frequently collide with cars and trucks. Highway 30, the main connector between Portland and Astoria, is poorly lit in most places and sees fatal crashes every year.

This bill still allows officers to use their discretion. When I asked my colleagues and supporters of this bill about this point, they assured me that a law enforcement officer could still pull someone over if they deemed the vehicle was unsafe according to ORS 815.020. This bill, if practiced in this way, would be unevenly applied across the state: providing protection to Oregonians in well lit, paved areas with few traffic risks, but almost no protection in any corner of Oregon where there were high speeds, roads in disrepair, risks of interaction with wildlife, or inadequate overhead lighting on the roads. An officer with the intention of causing harm in an area with better road conditions (often more populated areas) might think twice as a result of this bill. An officer with the intention of causing harm in an area with poorer road conditions (often more rural areas) could still justify their behavior by claiming that the vehicle was unsafe due to consistently dangerous conditions of any given road.

Assuming that rural police officers rely on their discretion and continue to cite drivers with these equipment violations, there is a risk of disproportionate enforcement in rural areas compared to populated areas with better road conditions. Enforcement of this bill could also mean that rural Oregonians are still paying the cost of expensive citations whereas Oregonians in more populated areas are not.

This bill could put my constituents at serious risk of traffic accidents, injuries, and even fatalities; and doesn't protect them the way that it protects Oregonians in more populated areas of the state. My constituents are no safer as a result of this bill. That's not a trade I can make. We must strive to ensure that Oregonians experience real safety in every corner of the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Armitage".

Senator Rachel Armitage

