



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 3, 2022

Timothy G. Sekerak
Chief Clerk of the House
State Capitol Building, H271
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Vote Explanation on Senate Bill 1579-A

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

When we try to pass a bill that directly or indirectly establishes racial preference, we must establish a legislative record to support it. That lies at the heart of the dispute regarding the constitutionality of this bill. I read the LC opinions as not saying that it was assuredly constitutional or not, but rather that it may or may not be depending on the record. So, here are 40 facts about our state's long, systemic history of inequities.

- 1) Just this year, the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis compiled census data on the national median income and the study shows *that for every dollar* the average white Oregon household brings in, **a Black Oregon household will make just \$0.71 cents on the dollar.**
- 2) African Americans with a four-year college degree earn, on average, \$11,000 less than their white counterparts.
- 3) Home ownership. A study last year showed 85% of homeowners in Oregon identified as white.
- 4) The same study found that only 59% of Native American Oregonians, 39% of Black Oregonians, and 29% of Pacific Islander Oregonians are homeowners.
- 5) Homeownership rates are far lower for communities of color in Oregon than for whites – **nearly 64,000 households-of-color would need to become homeowners to eliminate the gap** in homeownership rates.
- 6) In 2019 the Oregon Legislature's found that "Oregon's communities of color do not have



equal, fair, or equitable access to homeownership.”

7) The legislature’s comprehensive review of public, private, and nongovernmental organization data sources makes clear that **these disparities are the result of historical and current discriminatory housing policies and practices** such as:

8) **Disparate access to credit – we passed the cash money bill because BIPOC people are more likely to be unbanked.**

9) **Generational poverty – BIPOC families are less likely to be able to pass wealth to their children.**

10) **Conscious and unconscious racial biases** which are exacerbated by present-day barriers that disproportionately impact Oregon’s communities of color.

11) In 2015 the Urban League of Portland reported that between 2006 and 2010, **one-third of Black families living in Oregon lived in poverty**, compared to just 12% of their white counterparts.

12) Within Portland’s BIPOC population, 47% live in poverty, whereas only 14% of those who identified as white were living under the poverty line.

13) The Oregon Center for Public Policy finds that **one out of every two black children in Oregon lives in poverty.**

14) Oregon Employment Department data from 2018 indicates that average wages for Black, Native American, and Hispanic/Latino workers ranged from \$39,000 to \$45,000 annually, while **their white counterparts earned at least \$10,000 more.**

15) The unemployment rates for Black people in Portland is 9% -- more than twice that of white people.

16) In 2018, *Oregon’s State Health Assessment* found evident racism in the Portland housing market: A City of Portland audit reported that **landlords discriminated against Black and Latino renters 64% of the time**, charging them higher rents, higher deposits, and additional fees.

17) It started early - Looking back to 1862, Oregon adopted a disturbing POC Tax requiring all Blacks, Chinese, Hawaiians, and biracial residents in Oregon to pay an additional tax of \$5 each.

18) If these Oregonians of color could not pay the tax, **the law empowered the State to press**

them into servitude maintaining state roads for \$0.50 cents per day.

19) While we're on the topic of historical inequalities, that same year – 1862 – Oregon banned interracial marriages and it was **illegal for whites to marry anyone more than 25% Black.**

20) In 1863 Oregon excluded African Americans from serving on juries.

21) In 1866, Oregon lawmakers went a step further with their marriage ban by extending the legalized discrimination to prevent mixed marriages with anyone more than a ¼ Chinese and ¼ Native American.

22) *A Chronology of Racial Exclusion and Civil Rights Law* reminds us that in 1870, despite failing to pass in Oregon and California, the Fifteenth Amendment granting Black men the right to vote, is added to the U.S. Constitution. Thankfully, the federal law superseded the racist clause in the Oregon Constitution banning Black suffrage. Notably, it would be 50 years later until women secured the right to vote in 1920 – and millions of women and men of color wouldn't fully see the right to vote until the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

23) At the same time the nation debated Women's Suffrage, the Ku Klux Klan arrived in Eugene. Documented by the UO's *Daily Emerald* archives, in 1922 the KKK held a parade in the streets of Eugene and burned a cross atop of Skinner's Butte. The KKK even backed a gubernatorial candidate supporting the election of Governor Walter Pierce who won handily. And *PDX Monthly* reports that **Oregon's KKK chapter was believed to have been the highest per-capita membership in the country.**

24) In Governor Pierce's inaugural year in office, the Oregon legislature passed the Alien Business Restriction Law allowing local governments to refuse business licenses to "aliens" such as Japanese and Chinese. As documented in *A Chronology of Racial Exclusion and Civil Rights Law*, the law also required grocery stores and hotels run by so-called "aliens" to publicly display and advertise their nationalities.

25) That same year, 1923, **Oregon's legislative body passed a bill preventing Japanese and Chinese resident from owning or leasing land.** The aim of the "Alien Land Law" was clear: reduce Asian farmers to laborers by prohibiting their land ownership and leasehold.

26) The 35th Oregon Legislative Assembly passed a law in 1930 limiting the ability of Japanese residents to own real estate.

27) Twelve years later, under Executive Order 9066, the U.S. Army removed from their communities more than 4,000 Oregonians of Japanese ancestry. They and their American-born

children were relocated to the Portland Assembly Center – essentially **held as prisoners of war before being transported to 16 internment camps or “relocation centers”** throughout Oregon and Idaho.

28) As Japanese Oregonians were forcibly removed from their homes, under the Mexican Farm Labor Program, or MFLP, Oregon saw an influx of Mexican laborers in 1942.

29) The Mexican laborers’ status as non-immigrant workers was tenuous and they were subjected to ongoing social discrimination. In 1945 the workers encountered violent resistance from growers and local officials as the laborers attempted to organize to improve working conditions around fair pay, housing, and addressing the inadequate safety measures related to extremely long hours.

More than 75 years later, it’s not lost on me that the Oregon legislature is still debating these critical issues of parity and fairness for Oregon farm workers. The MFLP “Bracero” program ended in 1947.

30) Throughout the 1950’s and ‘60’s the U.S. Government terminated the recognition of 109 Indian tribes and bands. **Here in Oregon, 62 Tribal Communities lost Federal Recognition.**

31) Native American households in Oregon experience high levels of income inadequacy with almost a third (30%) of households falling below the standard.

32) Back to housing and redlining: From 1924 through 1950, under Article 34, **a broker was forbidden from “introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality . . . whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood.”**

33) In 2010, 69% of Black people in Multnomah County were spending over 30% of their income on housing.

34) The National Poverty center reports many forms of housing instability are associated with negative health outcomes.

35) Last year both Multnomah and Lane County declared racism a public health crisis.

36) According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, **poverty rates in communities of color were as much as double** the poverty rate for white Oregonians from 2014-2018.

37) In 1990, *The Oregonian* found that altogether, Portland's banks made only 10 mortgage loans in the Black neighborhood of Albina, while at the same time they'd made over a hundred loans in similarly sized other parts of the city.

38) The 2019 Poverty in Multnomah County report showed that between 1990 and 2017, the total number of people of color in Multnomah County grew by 169% while the number of people of color in poverty grew by 148%.

39) During the Covid-19 pandemic, Oregonians saw a 41% decline in Black-owned businesses and 32% drop in Latino business owners, while white entrepreneurs experienced only a 17% decline.

40) Finally, let us all remember **when Oregon entered the Union in 1859, it was the only state to explicitly forbid Black people from living within its borders.**

These are 40 facts dating from the time of Oregon's statehood to the troubling inequities that still exist today. I hope this is helpful in establishing a legislative record as to the necessity of Senate Bill 1579-A.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Marty Wilde".

State Representative Marty Wilde, House District 11