



**OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

6/13/2025

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

RE: Vote Explanation on Repassage of Senate Bill 916

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

My decision to vote yes on SB 916 was not one that I took lightly. As a former superintendent, I understand firsthand the challenges public sector employers face when negotiating under tight budget constraints. I also understand the hardship that a strike imposes, especially when both parties are negotiating in good faith but remain at an impasse. I've remained at the bargaining table through many tense negotiations. When a district and its employees can't reach an agreement, everyone loses — especially students and families. A strike is a worst-case scenario.

I've heard from local governments across my community about the challenges that would arise from the various iterations of this concept. I've also heard from workers about the need to make their voices heard in the workplace while being able to provide for their basic needs. Oregonians are struggling to afford the rising cost of routine essentials. Housing prices have outpaced wages; childcare and healthcare costs strain family budgets; and necessities like groceries and utilities are as expensive as a luxury purchase. For many, these pressures aren't just financial, they're deeply personal, forcing families to make tough choices about where they live, how they work, and what they can afford to put on the table. In these times, the right to advocate for a well-paying job is all the more important.

While seeking the appointment for this seat, I reiterated that I would not support this bill if it amended ORS 243.736, which prevents a class of public employees from striking that includes firefighters, police officers, parole officers, and other employees directly interacting with public safety. I have confirmed with the Legislative Counsel that Senate Bill 916 does *not* alter ORS 243.736. Had the bill made such a change, I would not have supported it. My commitment to safeguarding public safety remains unwavering.

I also sought analysis from the Legislative Fiscal Office to better understand the financial implications of the bill. I have determined that while reimbursing employers, including our local governments, new costs tied to Unemployment Insurance benefit repayments may be faced during labor disputes. The LFO projects these impacts to be limited in scope, with an estimated \$2.1 million statewide across all public employers over the next two years. The recent changes to the bill are substantive; a ten-week cap and a two-week waiting period would bring Oregon's law in line with states like New York or New Jersey and provide meaningful safeguards while reducing the financial risks on local governments.

Though this bill now heads to the governor's desk, my involvement is far from over. I am committed to tracking the implementation of this concept and addressing any unintended consequences that arise. I represent a district of approximately seventy thousand individuals — we might not always agree. My commitment to my community is to take every decision that comes before me seriously, to think independently, and to listen to every perspective.



Sincerely,

*Rep. Sue Rieke-Smith, Ed.D.*

Rep. Sue Rieke-Smith. House District 26