

Senator Ted Ferrioli

Senator Bill Hansell

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Senate Republicans Testify on Bill to Shrink Oregon's Rural-Urban Divide

Salem, OR - Today, the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources heard public testimony on Senate Bill 25. SB 25 supports economic development in rural Oregon counties that have seen little to none of the economic growth and job creation that many urban areas have benefited from since the recession.

SB 25 exempts counties under 50,000 residents without recent population growth from restrictive, one-size-fits-all land use regulations as they design and implement comprehensive economic development plans aimed at growing jobs and improving the local economy.

"We must respect the differences and challenges facing rural Oregon as they strive to recover from the recent economic downturn," said Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli (R-John Day). "Oregon's rural communities are vital to our state's history, economy and culture, and we must ensure they are not so burdened by land use laws that they have no ability to thrive."

One county that could benefit from SB 25, Grant County, has consistently lost population while the economy sputters. Grant County currently has a 10.4% unemployment rate, a close second behind Crook County at 10.5%. Counties that meet the requirements of SB 25 could streamline their economic development processes, finding new ways to attract industry, manage new growth and get people back to work.

"Rural Oregon needs flexibility to invest in growth and development so citizens have access to opportunities available in other parts of the state," explained Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena). "The only way to grow population is by creating jobs and opportunities to attract new residents. SB 25 is a crucial component of removing barriers to opportunity and shrinking the divide between urban and rural Oregon."

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