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Ways & Means Democrats Fail Oregon Small Businesses

Three Amendments to Protect Small and Agricultural Businesses Fail on Party-Line Vote

Salem, OR - Today, Democrats on the Joint Ways & Means Committee approved a new paid sick leave mandate costing Oregon businesses \$914 when fully implemented. SB 454 now goes to the Senate and House floors for approval.

Arguing that the paid sick leave mandate, currently applicable to businesses with ten or more employees, unfairly harms small businesses, Senate Republican committee members moved three amendments to protect small businesses from the high cost of the new rules. The -40 amendment that exempts agricultural businesses that rely on seasonal workers was moved by Senator Chuck Thomsen (R-Hood River), and failed on a party-line vote.

"Farmers and ranchers who depend on seasonal workers to get the job done cannot absorb the cost of paid sick leave during high-intensity periods like harvest," explained Senator Thomsen. "Big Ag companies can stomach the cost, but this bill will be catastrophic for our small-and-medium sized agricultural businesses that provide food for Oregon families."

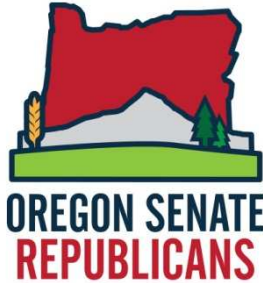
Senate Republicans moved two other amendments, arguing that the mandate unfairly harms small business owners already struggling to survive burdensome taxes and fees imposed on their businesses. One amendment would exempt businesses with less than 25 employees, and another would exempt business defined by the Affordable Care Act as a "small business" with less than 50 employees.

"Democrats are refusing to protect the small businesses that provide goods and services for Oregon families," said Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena). "92% of Oregon businesses have 25 or

fewer employees. It's time legislative leaders start standing up for small business owners and protect them from this expensive new mandate that will shutter shops and raise prices."

In addition to the \$914 cost to Oregon businesses, SB 454 will cost school districts \$16 million over a two year period, according to the Oregon School Boards Association. Adding a \$16 million cost to schools is unacceptable after Democrats underfunded the K-12 education budget earlier this session, argued Senate Republicans.

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