



from the office of

SENATOR KIM THATCHER

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Bipartisan Legislation Will Shield Public Records Advocate from Political Interference

SALEM, Ore.— The Oregon Senate passed [Senate Bill 500](#) Wednesday on a vote of 28-1. Under the legislation, the public records advocate will become an independent office, giving it separation from the Governor and political influence.

By creating an independent office, the public records advocate would be granted more autonomy, rather than the position and office being under the governor's control.

“The public's access to government records shouldn't be political,” said Senator Kim Thatcher (R-Keizer), author of the legislation. “This bill will rebuild trust between Oregonians and their government. It will ensure more transparency and accountability in the handling of public records.”

Since 2019, two public records advocates appointed by the Governor have resigned. Ginger McCall had alleged political pressure from the Governor's office in handling public records requests. Becky Chiao also resigned after concerns arose over her objection to making the office independent from politics.

The bill has broad support from journalists, advocates, and the current public records advocate, Todd Albert.

In written testimony in support of SB 500, Albert said that making the office independent would “focus its limited resources on continuing the day-to-day work of being an impartial, consistently reliable office that has become a trusted voice in the ongoing conversation about transparency and access to information in Oregon.”

The bill will now head to the House for consideration.

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