

Submitter: Elvis Clark

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3499

Urban Renewal should definitely be subject to the approval of voters in the jurisdiction(s) impacted. My city of Milwaukie enacted an urban renewal district, without gaining voter approval; and now the Urban Renewal District is projected to eventually divert nearly ten percent of Milwaukie's general fund property tax proceeds from basic services like police into the urban renewal fund, which will end up spending on pet projects of the City Councilors choosing. The public generally does not understand how Urban Renewal is funded or how it works. Milwaukie's Urban Renewal District is part of the reason the North Clackamas Fire District asked for a special property tax levy, because Milwaukie and other urban renewal districts were diverting millions of property tax dollars from the operation of the Fire District. It is also one of main reasons the City of Milwaukie hiked its franchise fees/taxes on utility bills, like PGE and Northwest Natural. The City is using the added franchise fees/taxes for General Fund purposes - a general fund that is losing increasing amounts of money to its urban renewal district. If a City or County wants to adopt an urban renewal plan, it should sell the plan to its voters by fielding their best argument in favor of the plan (Voter Guide) and gaining voter approval - rather than pitching it in a dog and pony show which the vast majority of voters choose not to be so schmoozed.