

March 15, 2002

Mr. Thomas Endicott
Oregon Progress Board
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Dear Mr. Endicott:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the *Oregon Shines* benchmark on volunteerism.

In 1999 we contacted the Oregon Progress Board after seeing a D- grade on this benchmark, "Percentage of Oregonians Who Volunteer at Least 50 Hours Per Year." As was indicated in the remarks of that year's reports, "The nature of volunteerism is shifting from the traditional model of a regular time commitment with a certain organization to an "episodic" model." We support a change in the benchmark to recognize this change in the way people volunteer today.

Volunteerism received a grade of F in the report published in 2001. While indicating that volunteerism as measured in this benchmark was at a decade low, the report went on to note that the measure does not include episodic volunteers. In the section *What Needs to be Done*, the report focused on a study by the Independent Sector documenting the shift away from traditional volunteerism to episodic. It cited research that showed volunteers need "to be asked and actively recruited into local organizations that do not necessarily tie them down to a regular volunteer schedule."

Last year alone SOLV involved Oregonians in over 96,000 volunteer episodes, contributing 619,220 hours of service. This is an average of 6 ¾ hours per episode. While some SOLV volunteers turn out regularly, the majority may attend only one or a few volunteer events a year and would thus not be counted in the *Oregon Shines* benchmark. Other Oregon volunteer organizations seem to be thriving as well. In our experience, many of these organizations are also involving volunteers in short-term, episodic activities.

We believe it is time to change the benchmark on volunteerism to reflect the realities of how people volunteer and the benefit that comes to Oregon communities from these volunteer episodes. The SOLV volunteers contributed over \$10,000,000 in service to Oregon last year.

Perhaps using the Independent Sector's measurement "Percent of Population that Volunteers," discarding the 50 hours a year qualification, would be appropriate. This would include those who may only find one day during the year to volunteer, but take pride in that involvement and achieve something worthwhile by joining tens of thousands of other episodic volunteers. Alternatively, "Number of Volunteer Hours Contributed by Oregonians" could provide an ongoing measurement of the value of this service.

Thank you again for this opportunity and please let us know if we can provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Jack McGowan
Executive Director

Jan McGowan
Associate Director

SOLV was
created in 1969
by Governor
Tom McCall
and others to
help keep Oregon
livable through
volunteerism.
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