



TINA KOTEK  
GOVERNOR

April 16, 2026

The Honorable Tobias Read  
Secretary of State  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: House Bill 4177

Dear Secretary Read:

Pursuant to Article V, Section 15b, I am returning House Bill 4177 unsigned because of my objections as outlined below.

While I understand the intent of the bill, which was to improve clarity in the statutes that guide public officials and governing bodies in conducting their work in an ethical and transparent manner, there are concerns that some of the new language could be utilized to circumvent transparency. I am also aware that without legal clarity, significant uncertainty will remain regarding how members of governing bodies should engage with the public. The Oregon Government Ethics Commission's inconsistent guidance and training for public officials, many of whom are volunteers, has further complicated the situation.

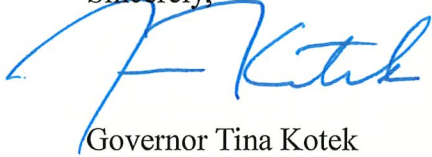
Oregon law must be clear regarding the types of communications allowed outside of public meetings. I believe there is a way to write the needed changes into law without hindering the public's right to ethical and transparent government and without undermining the public's trust in their elected and appointed leaders. Elected officials, their staff, and volunteer board members need clarity on very practical matters – ranging from media engagement to scheduling meetings – so they can carry out their work responsibly without creating unintended consequences that impede governments' ability to function.

To accomplish this important work, the Oregon Government Ethics Commission must work urgently, diligently, and openly with the legislature, my office, and key stakeholders to provide as much clarity as possible between now and the next legislative session and develop workable language for passage in the 2027 session.

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I am certain that the dedicated Oregonians who commit their lives, careers, and countless hours to public service can work together to find a solution that resolves the ambiguities with Oregon's current public meetings law. I expect all parties to remain engaged and to come to the table with open minds and the determination necessary to accomplish this important work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tina Kotek", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Governor Tina Kotek

cc: Senate President Rob Wagner  
Speaker of the House Julie Fahey